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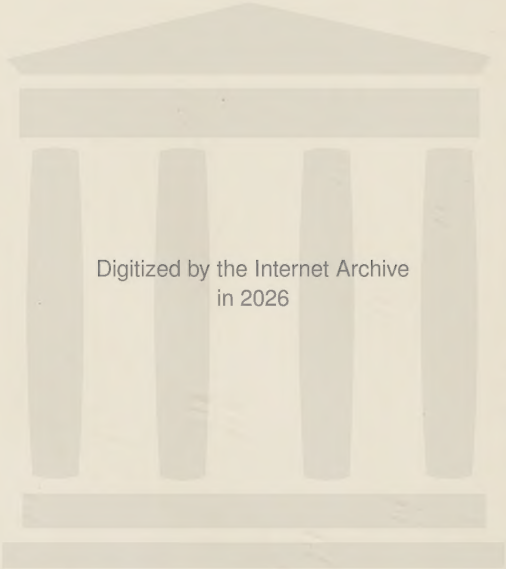
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Ten Lectures

ON THE

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF UNITARIAN THOUGHT AND DOCTRINE.

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UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

Ten Lectures

ON THE

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF UNITARIAN THOUGHT AND DOCTRINE,

DELIVERED BY VARIOUS MINISTERS,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

BRITISH AND FOREIGN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN

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IN MARCH AND APRIL, 1881.

WITH

A PREFACE BY REV. JAMES MARTINEAU, D.D., LL.D.

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Preface.

The title of this volume would very imperfectly indicate the main design of the following Lectures, if taken to imply that they are put forth in the interest of a system or a sect, and constitute a mere rebutting argument against the imputation of purely negative teaching. If incidentally they correct the false impression implied in this charge, it is well. But they are presented in the service of positive religion, and not in any spirit of self-vindication.

Nor do the Lecturers take up an attitude against the faith of their fellow-christians in any of its parts. If they see in it what they suppose to be errors or superfluities, it is not by attacking but by dispensing with these, that they conduct their argument, and reach the goal without them.

And what is that goal? It is the common standing-ground of all Christians. To no one of the affirmations registered in the Table of Contents will contradiction be offered, whatever qualifications may be suggested, from any side of Christendom. The Lecturers stand forth in defence of truths which others also hold, but hold under

conditions less favourable, it is conceived, to their clear exhibition and firm support. Hence they feel a special obligation laid upon them to bear witness to a group of connected and momentous beliefs which, from historical causes and under ecclesiastical guardianship, have been brought into a precarious position.

According to the accepted theory, Christianity is a Divine economy for snatching a ruined world from its perdition. It is a redemption, wholly preternatural, relative to a prior fall, wholly natural; effected by a miraculous paroxysm in human history, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, of one of the Persons in the Godhead; continued by the special grace and inspiration of another; and made conditional on the conscious need and believing acceptance of this scheme on the part of the candidate for mercy.

Let it be at once admitted that whoever lives in the interior of this system necessarily presupposes the Holiness of God, the Supremacy of the Moral Law, the Life beyond death, the Communion between the human spirit and the Divine, and the perfectness of Christ's humanity. The theory would have no meaning, were not Sin the extremity of ill, an intolerable perversion of the true nature of the soul; and the remedy of it the supreme end of God in himself and in his revealer.

But for those who cannot find themselves at home within this system, its great presuppositions, the very bases of Religious life, are rendered by it extraordinarily diffi-

cult; *so* difficult as to be but rarely saved, and to give colour to the miserable threat, that we must choose between Catholicism and Atheism. It trains its disciples in habits of thought and conceptions of life which, however harmless when neutralized by the doctrine of "salvation" which they only serve to introduce, leave upon the heart a fatal shadow if any eclipse of doubt fall upon that later light.

For instance: in order to enhance the world's "Redemption," it is indispensable to have a lively impression of its prior ruin. A faith which is to end in a rapture of gratitude must begin with an hypothesis of fear. Hence it becomes the theologian's habit to look out for all the traces of a "fallen" world, and crowd them into the foreground of his picture, whether of the outward scene or of the inward contents of life. He dwells upon its sufferings as judgments, upon its sins as marks of moral impotence. As they are his great witnesses of Divine alienation, he keeps them for ever under question; and does not like to hear them corrected or contradicted by appeal to the beauty of the natural order and the magnanimities of the human spirit. An earth fitted up as a place of exile from Paradise,—a race that has become the slave of evil and the heir of death,—cannot be expected to exhibit, unless in gleams of sterile reminiscence, any vestiges of the glories they have lost. The stars indeed may retain their majesty and show the handy-work of God: for they are in heaven, beyond the taint of this guilty sphere. But in what he sees

around him here, in the solitudes of nature or the experiences of unconverted men, the evangelical believer finds no favourite retreats for his piety; rather, what is purely *undivine*, except as containing the enigmas which the gospel alone can solve.

Suppose then that the gospel which he has been taught fails him; that its constitutive miracles become incredible to him, so that the scheme of redemption vanishes: in what kind of world does he find himself? In the world of the Pessimist: for what else is a world cursed and not redeemed, where the deserts are larger than the fields, and the elements waste more than they mature, and scanty fruits are wrung from the soil by labour that is only pain, and the lord of lower creatures is himself the slave of greed and guilt? Accustomed to have the scene of natural life brought before him chiefly under these sad aspects, he has carried a detective eye through his experience and found them in abundance, while remaining blind to everything besides. He may no longer believe in "the Fall" any more than in the "Redemption:" but this only takes away the prior Paradise, without sweeping the clouds from the world outside its gates. Could there be a roll-call of the Pessimists of our time, be they compassionate or be they cynical, there would probably be found in their ranks fewer of the mere men of society than of the mutinous deserters of Church theology.

It cannot surprise us if one who, in the shipwreck of his early faith, is flung upon this desolate island, becomes

bereft of all divine vision and can no longer speak of God. How can confusion assure him of an Infinite order? or suffering, of perfect Love? or wrong, of eternal Righteousness? How can he find, in the littleness and selfishness which he reads in men, the scale and sanctity of an immortal soul? His imagination has been kept close prisoner with the seeming physical disturbances and moral enormities of the world; and he has neither intellectual grasp of the hierarchy of natural laws, nor spiritual insight into the depths of human affection and the revelations of the human conscience. And so, he can make nothing of the world that is,—his sole remaining base of thought. To him, it is no Divine affair; anything but that: he feels nothing but its terrible enigmas; and leaves them all unsolved. His heartfelt rest on the primary truth of all religion is rendered contingent on his retaining his early faith whole and entire,—a condition driven within narrower limits every day.

On the other hand, the Unitarian's Christianity is no abnormal transaction in reversal of a "Fall,"—no Divine irruption upon an undivine world,—nothing which revolutionizes the constitution of things; but simply a revelation of the highest term in that constitution, through a perfect spiritual nature, appealing by word and death and life before and after to the supreme affections of our own. It is the Religion of Jesus, seen in the characteristics of his personality, his thoughts, and the story of his ministry. In that religion, the Past is not treated with horror, as a

disease or sin to be cancelled, but with reverence, as holy ground, leading up, however, to a height more holy still the ascending highway of "God in History." Whoever recognizes this unbroken continuity of sacredness in the course of things, in place of cataclysms which upset each other, has his evidence of the Divine Presence everywhere: and were any portion of history, even the best-loved, to melt into fable, God would not merely remain for him in the prior age, but would fill the empty place, and the world would be not less but only otherwise divine. He is not flung into any scene which he has not learned to consecrate. He is not snatched into chaos away from the intellectual order of the heavens and the earth. He is not made deaf to the accents of conscience, or blind to the light of beauty, or dead to the looks of affection: and these are they that testify of God. He has therefore this advantage; that, to make his "Affirmation of God," he can take his stand not exclusively on the shifting alluvial slope of history, but on the rooted rock which belongs to the very structure of the world.

Whoever then maintains that the Gospel first instituted, or re-instituted, harmonious relations between God and man, stakes the actual possibility of these relations on the Gospel history; and, under failure of this condition (i.e. of the truth of either the history itself or of his interpretation of it), is thrown back upon a godless world, from which every sacred element is absent. But, short of this it may be maintained that we are wholly dependent on the

Gospel, especially on the Incarnation and the Resurrection, though not for the *existence*, yet for the *knowledge* of our Divine relations. But for the former of these miracles, it is said, we should never have realized any personal communion with God; but for the latter, any appointed life beyond death. This more moderate view still places its advocate at a needless disadvantage in setting forth the common truths of all Christian faith. For he takes up this strange position: the Living God does really hold and always has held personal relations with every human being, and has constituted the soul for a responding life; yet has he so hidden these momentous facts, that, though they belong to the conscious mind, no vestige of them has betrayed their presence, and their secret would have been kept for ever, but for the miracle to the Virgin Mary. And again: Human Life has always been and will always be of indefinite duration, the time between the earthly body's birth and death being but the prologue to the real drama; yet of this sublime destination no hint is given either in the scale and proportions of the soul, or in the auguries of conscience, or in the visions of sorrowing love, or in the prospective look of the world's Providence: so that this secret also would never have been let out, if the crucified body had slept on in its sepulchre and the spirit passed unseen to its immortality. Can there be a more fatal paradox than to say, that these stupendous things can be, and yet make no sign? If they are facts at all, they are facts of our own nature, interwoven with its texture,—nay,

the very warp upon which the whole pattern of our being is wrought: and if no experience evidences their presence, no miracle can bring them from the dark.

From the embarrassment of any such paradoxical position the authors of the following Lectures stand entirely free. The truths which they present have their living reality and their abundant signs in the constitution of nature and the mind of man: and if they wait on Christianity for their confirmed hold on human faith and affection, it is because the divine life of Christ has finally justified the supreme surmises of conscience and the loftiest interpretation of the meaning of our existence, and so turned the most daring ideal aspirations into quiet and believing prayers. His Religion reverses no natural order, creates no supernatural, but fulfils and perfects the relations of our life to both, in surrender to the steadfast will and communion with the free spirit of the Father and Light of men. Even in exhibiting what is most special to it, the teacher has an advantage, if he sees in it the consummation and crown of truths otherwise and elsewhere attested, and pervading by their affinities the very structure of nature and humanity.

If the general conception and character of this volume are thus adequately justified, little need be added respecting the particular Lectures. They will speak for themselves to the reader: and he must not regard it as a departure from their plan, if he finds in them not only striking varieties of manner, but even discrepancies of

opinion. They constitute a group of independent essays, wherein each writer sustains, as he deems best, a thesis on which the others have not been consulted. Nor must it be supposed, from the Table of Contents, either that the list of Unitarian Affirmations is offered as complete, or that the subjects have been selected as standing all upon the same line. Personal, as well as logical, considerations have had their share in determining the contents of the book: and it is sent forth in the hope that, as it speaks with various voices, it may the better go home to various minds, so "that each in his own tongue may hear of the wonderful works of God."

I.

The Affirmation of God.

By R. A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.

My topic is stupendous, and the time I may occupy is narrowly limited. Therefore I spend no words in apologies for the boldness of my undertaking. To set up and consolidate *the Affirmation that God is*, in fifty minutes, so that no loophole shall be left for the attack of the sceptic, I certainly cannot undertake; but a man ought to be able, between two strikings of the clock, to indicate the main lines on which his own Theism is built up.

First of all, then, I observe this historic fact wide-spread over centuries and latitudes. The savage man interprets every motion which he beholds as the direct outcome of some Will. If a stone, loosened by a season's rains, rolls down a mountain-side, he concludes that the stone has in itself the choice of motion; if the boulder plunging to the valley strike and maim or kill his comrade or his child, he attributes to it malignant energy, and pours out trembling deprecation or seeks charms against it that it may not next strike him. That is the religion or philo-

sophy of races of men in their crude childhood, be it on the plains of Asia thousands of years ago, or in the South Sea Islands now, and that rude creed we describe as Fetichism.

But the race advances to adolescence; and in the fervour of its youth it shifts its faith, and believes no longer that each stock and stone has self-determining power, but rather that behind each group or class of nature's movements there is a presiding genius determining them. The Hindu Rishi saw in the falling of the rain from heaven the rich juice dropping from the udders of the dark cloud-cows which Indra rescued. The bard of Hellas recognized in the myriad play of wave and billow on the Ægean Sea the activity of the god Poseidon; while Æolus puffed out the many winds to scour plain and city.

Our European peoples have long since forgotten childhood, and even youth has passed away. We stand in the wealth and power of matured manhood, and we have put away childish things. Gods of sky and ocean, nymphs flitting through the leafy grove or floating down the brook, —these are no longer parts either of religion or of philosophy with us. But we note that the common characteristic of those two great stages of human thought—Fetichism and Polytheism—was this: that every motion seen on the vast fields of nature was conceived to be the direct result of some conscious Will or other.

But for us moderns an absolutely new order of thought has been created in the magnificent achievements of physical science. We speak a new tongue and our minds have learnt a new method. We are asked to rise above

the vain imaginings of ancients and of savages, and to seek the causes of all the multitudinous waxings and wanings, growings and decayings, vibrations and scintillations, which make up the motions of the innumerable particles of the universe, in quite a new order of conceptions. In every branch of physics we are invited to trace a long sequence and a vast concord of causes inherent in things themselves, and expressed purely in terms of physics without any reference at all to mind, intelligence, and will. And the revelation of the great unfolding from an unimaginably far-off past down to the ordered universe of to-day, is the grandest diorama that has ever given delight to man.

What, then, now are the main and broad ideas in the great new-won realms of knowledge? The chief of all is the marshalling of causes into regiments, their classification and binding into groups, and the certainty that like conditions regularly result in like effects. We moderns know that in currents of electricity, in slipping of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen together, and interlocking into regimental order so as to become water, there is no hap-hazard, but rigid conformity to a unity of method, and that water results from no other procedure whatever. This knowledge and the like, we call knowledge of LAW. And the first characteristic note of modern knowledge, felt after, hinted at, half grasped but let slip again of old, but in our day held firm and sure for ever, is, that LAW pervades each group of phenomena everywhere. Thus in all places where water is, the like elements have become water. In all places where protoplasm is, the like ele-

ments have become protoplasm. In all places where animal structure has come from protoplasm, the like buildings up of cell on cell have resulted in animal structure. So that the processes of things are grouped in unities, and all the visible and tangible world may be gathered up under innumerable unities of process which we name *Law*.

But our philosophers have not stopped at Law. They have gone on to trace the process of *unfolding* by which the adult tree, or beast, or man, grows from the germ—shown that in a sense the oak is in the acorn, the lion in the cub, Shakespeare in the baby. Each of these has taken nutriment from the environment, and subjugated that nutriment to some original inherent tendency of its nature. Thus there is not only a unity in the way all acorns burst and shoot the living plumule into the soil, but there is some strong-knit unity of idea all through the career of each acorn by which it steadily goes on through all the years till it waxes a mighty tree. And there is like unity threading together all the days of the lion-cub till it itself grows to be the lord of the forest. And there is like unity penetrating Shakespeare from the cradle to the grave, so that all through, ere ever he passed out of Stratford town or lost sight of Avon waters on till he has written on the scroll of fame the last word of his everlasting monument, he is William Shakespeare, no other, waxing from infant years towards his mighty adolescence and spreading forth at last his power over unborn centuries, always unexchangeable with any other babe in Warwickshire or any other player on the stage, stamped ever with his own individuality.

Nay, modern science carries this idea of development under one unswerving, guiding force much further still. Like to the growth of the individual tree, or beast, or man, with unity of idea throughout its petty span of days, so, we now learn, is the growth certainly of species, probably of genus, perhaps of the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. They are one, from one origin, expressions of one idea, parts of one growth, vast indeed and varied, yet all contained at first in like germs, and having differed only by various assimilation of environment. Nay, scientific *imagination* would go further, outstripping scientific *proof*, though that lags not on the path, and more and more inclines to the stupendous allegation, that not earth and its teeming life alone, nor only our domestic sun with his little family of circling planets, but all and more than all that telescope can sweep into view in the gem-strewn skies, is outgrown by action of indomitable law, from one primeval element differentiating into stars and worlds on a scale of time in which thousands of ages count but as the tick of the clock, yet governed ever by unity of shaping force. Here, in the doctrine of Development, Unfolding, or Evolution, is the second grand idea of modern science, bringing what seemed varied and broken once into an unbroken unity, as though one inscrutable Power wrought upon all.

But yet one other leading discovery in modern science seems to gather up all the seemingly varied activity of the universe into the expression of some one single Power. That discovery is the interchange and equivalence of the movements derived from diverse forces—the grand law of

the Conservation of Energy. No longer may we fancy any essential variance or incompatibility of energies. But all energies are Protean shapes of one all-pervading energy, like words in French and English, Hebrew and Chinese, sounding diverse as scarlet wool from the white lustre of the snow, yet all but expressions of the same idea. The aerolite is hurled through the air and strikes the earth. The mighty fall is arrested, and the force of it seems dead. But it is not dead; it is translated into a precisely equivalent sum of heat, and the underlying, real, inscrutable energy itself has but changed its garment. And so irresistibly we are impelled, as we run through the changes of gravitation, magnetism, chemical affinity, heat, light, electricity, to know that these are one, and that Unity of Power is expressed in the whole vast interaction of them all which covers all the outstrewn worlds that are.

So that every sublime generalization of our modern physicists—the Reign of Law, Evolution, Conservation of Energy—impels us to the recognition that the Power behind nature in its vastest and its minutest phenomena, cannot be broken up into dissociated or antagonistic fragments, but is absolutely one throughout time and space.

But now let us see whether the earlier tribes of men were so very childish in postulating Will at the back of all phenomena,—in reading the manifestations of force or energy as the purposeful activity of conscious Will. In the form in which they put it, unquestionably they were; for stocks and stones have not self-determining Wills, neither are there departmental deities of rock and river, mountain, sea and sky. But in the essence of it

were they? We cannot stay to argue; and the thing, moreover, is a matter less for argument than for careful examination and simple declaration of the actual, unavoidable workings of our own minds. For my part, then, I find a law quite unmistakable in my mind, that I am compelled, when I think of the daisy opening its dainty blossom to the sun, or the block of steel moving to the magnet, or the hydrogen and oxygen slipping into that ordered embrace which constitutes them water, to conceive of the real force which causes that motion, whether you call its mode of action heat, or magnetism, or chemical affinity, as akin to that force by which I lift up my arm, and raise my eyes to view the sunset, and plod my way along the road, and so to call it Will.

There are some things which we believe because we cannot help believing them; and this is one. We believe that twice two is four, not by mathematical proof, for that is exceedingly difficult, but because we cannot help it. And, though I never proved it, I know that those two twos make four here and in distant Sirius, now and throughout eternity, and I can think no other. And so likewise, as I know that it is Will that causes my own personal deeds, the only phenomena behind which I can get to see the cause, so also can I conceive no other but that Will also causes all other motion whatsoever, be it your movement when you shake me by the hand, or the motion of the daisy-petal, of the attracted steel, of the marshalled molecules of gas, of the winds that rush through the moaning forest, the meteor that shoots athwart the

sky, the giant sun revolving in the remotest chambers of the heavens. I say, I can think no other.

But men argue that this is an illusion, just as they have been found to argue that my impression of any actual outward world is all illusion. Yet I can think no other. They say that it is for lack of clear and clean use of the instrument of thought. But go back to it as I will, and try to see with them, I am ever compelled to cast back the charge, and to say that they who fancy that in unconscious matter cause can reside, or (as some argue) that the very idea of cause is an illusion of unscientific thought,—that these fail in the clear, clean handling of their tools, not I; and that wherever thought is precise and the mind is true to itself, there, behind every motion of matter, the cosmos through, mind recognizes that one sole, self-existent force, named in human language Will, of which all other so-called forces are but the expressions and the fitful forms.

Will, then, behind the motion of the waves upon the waters, the dropping of the leaves from the autumn trees, the falling of the snow upon the moor, the voyaging of the moon across the skies. I come to this by the force of the very constitution of my mind. Revolt against that constitution would be in me the one real philosophic infidelity.

So, then, we accord with Fetichist and Polytheist that Will is the one power which lies behind phenomena. It puts on the guise of a score of different interchanging forces, but the essence of them all is Will. But here is the one supreme difference between us and all of them of old,

by which our Theism transcends not Polytheism of India and of Greece alone, but even the gradually uprising Monotheism of the Hebrew prophets. We for the first time have some inkling of the mighty scale of things. We for the first time see the unity of purpose pervading all æons and all space. For us the Will behind phenomena is a sublime, supreme Unity whose extension in time and place is utterly beyond the bounds of our imagination, whose persistent, unbroken steadfastness and consistency covers all the realm of the universe in its minutest subtlety of atom locked with atom, no less than in the stupendous sweep of suns and stars along their orbit. So it is only now that Monotheism touches the period of its true maturity. Now for the first time in the long story of human thought have we some beginning of apprehension of the pervasive unity of all that is. Hitherto it has been possible for thoughtful men to harbour notions of caprice in God, of changes of plan, of God creating and repenting that He created, blessing and repenting that He blessed, cursing and repenting that He cursed, of God contending with forces hostile to Him, half-vanquished and recovering Himself, checked in some purpose and so turning to a modified purpose, the second-best. But now the vision has risen upon us of the universal and eternal Unity; of the interweaving and balance of all that is, by inter-connected force throughout, of the unbroken movement of development, the infinite unfolding, throughout the ages and beyond them before and after. And so at last the conception of God, the Will-force, behind all this, rises also into a sublimity of oneness which it could not have

before; and not only Will, but Intelligence all-embracing and steadfast, ever onward-moving Purpose, add themselves perforce to the mighty God-idea which fills our minds. We apprehend God as the One Infinite, Eternal, Purposeful Power, on whom depend, from whom proceed, all the range of phenomena whose array is without bound in space, whose procession is without bound in time.

So far it seems to me that the newest science, vividly apprehended in its largest meaning, compels to the recognition of that God whom religion postulates. The new doctrine of Evolution makes away with the upstart gods of the Pantheons,—it swallows up the mythic god of Israelite cosmogonies. But the Eternal it postulates with imperious force with which on previous scientific theories ever demanded God. The old theology asked for a Creator to start the world and wind up the vast machine at outset; then let Him go to sleep, only to wake and lift up His potent hand at those emergent moments when need was of interference, and the last of these was eighteen hundred years ago. The new theology, gladly adopting Evolution, the great unfolding, into its philosophy, compels to recognition of the Supreme, Perpetual Evolver, the Great Unfolder, in whom the awful name of God wins vaster meaning than in any scheme of past philosophy.

It has seemed well to indicate, with what perspicuity to me was possible, how to me modern science reads as a revelation. But it is certain, nevertheless, that multitudes do not so read it. To many, it seems the foe of Theism; to many more, as one who moves outside the temple and bears no heavenly testimony upon his tongue. And even

for those who can read God between the lines of the science primers, this revelation of Him is but cold and mechanical. It can consolidate a Theistic philosophy; it cannot touch with the fire of heaven a Theistic faith.

God, the perpetual Cause: even if we could always keep our philosophy screwed up to the pitch of being certain of Him thus, this will not sustain the moral life or keep religion a living force within us. Can we know God nearer? We want not to *prove* God only, even if our proof would always satisfy. We want to *feel* Him.

Let us then turn quite away from all the panorama of the outward, and look within our own breasts. Is life in us solely a growth after the manner of plants? Nay, but it is a strife as well. Every day we fight a battle. Every day we are worsted or victorious. That battle is between two forces in us which we call Righteousness and Sin.

What facts does the word Conscience cover? We need not trace its history; we will simply look at it as it is. When I contemplate one action, a deception, a deed of violence or injustice,—an imperious prohibition, uncaused by me, asserts itself within me. When I shrink from some other, a self-sacrifice, a renunciation,—an urgent exhortation pronounces itself in my soul. When I have given way to passion, rebuke from some whence, which I cannot put aside, stings me to the quick. When I have striven against evil promptings, crushed them out of me, and turned to do the right, a voice of approval makes music in me. These utterances are not mine; they supervene upon me. They check the current of my own personal

propulsion, or swell its volume and add motive to its force. They are not mine. They are speech to me. Not tongue and teeth can speak alone. But whenever thought or sentiment is flashed from mind to mind, there true speaking is. And these impressions which we name Conscience have all the marks of speaking. The command, the prohibition, the approval, the rebuke, so strongly bear the mark of communication from some other than ourself, that all ages have so interpreted them. They have ever been felt to be the utterance of a law and its sanctions not of the man's own making. Whence then? Some have striven to show that their authority is but that of the community of men made strong by the agreement of many generations. But who that writhes in remorse, who that has the song of a glad conscience in him, does not know that it is from a higher source than man? From whom, then? Irresistible impulse replies, "From God."

But irresistible impulse may be unreasonable. Is it a reasonable hypothesis that God actually utters himself in the conscience of man?

Turn back to the God whom just now we apprehended. What of Him did we apprehend while we moved among external phenomena solely? We apprehended a Will in all time and space pervading and effective, and a Will, too, charged with Eternal Purpose, towards which it unfolded all things. But if God be indeed such Will and Purpose, then God must be effective about us always, everywhere, pervasive as the air we breathe or the light that bathes us in its glory. On every particle of the world around us, on every molecule of our *outward* man, this force which we

name God is ever acting. Strange indeed if we in no way apprehended Him in the *inward* man! The air we inhale to enrich our coursing blood, this we feel and know as it lifts the locks on our brow or fans our heated cheek. But God is nearer than the air. The light that makes visible to us the marvels of the world, this we feel and know as its first rays kiss the slumber from our eyes or its noontide brilliance dazzles us with its splendour. But God is closer than the light. How then should God not press upon our consciousness? And God, as science hinted Him, was not effective Force alone, but Eternal Purpose also. Yet we, free in our wills to act as we may choose, must thereby be free to make for or against that holy Purpose. How then should it not be that that Purpose should impress itself on us, to impel us to its promotion, to restrain us from its retardation? Gifted with free will we are indeed; but who could conceive that the God who fills our being, who is nearer than any friend, who is the very atmosphere in which we live and move, the ocean of force by which we are and have continuance—who could conceive that that God should not press His Eternal Purpose on us always by speech which strikes to the spring of our inmost souls?

Not only reasonable, then, is it to conceive that that solemn and perpetual injunction which we call Conscience is in very truth the voice of God, the Eternal Cause, urging His Eternal Purpose, but, given God about us and given an Eternal Purpose which we can help or hinder, it would surely verge on the incredible that He should not thus make known His will to us. And so by conscience we

come to know that that which conscience urges, and we name Righteousness, is itself part and parcel of the Supreme Purpose towards which the Will of God leads on the Universe; and, made aware of the solemn sanctions with which God guards righteousness in us, we are able to add to the characteristics of God which we had found before—Will, Intelligence, and Purpose—the diviner characteristic of Righteousness.

But even so our apprehension of God is not complete, not even so complete as our human faculties can make it. His holiness and demand for righteousness in us is fitted indeed to fill us with awe. Our passion is hushed, our guilt abashed; but the glow and sheen of religion is not yet. Can we know God yet more closely?

There is a passage in the latest published book of Sermons of one who made his pulpit the most wondrous rallying-place of a spiritual philosophy in all the land, with which, for all his fame and all my veneration, if I rightly apprehend its meaning, I fail to bring myself into accord. From Dr. Martineau I make quotation with deference, and I criticise the passage quoted with diffidence; but I quote it because it gives me so apt a starting-point from which to indicate the third great method by which I hold that man can know his God.

Dr. Martineau writes these words: "'The heavens declare the *glory* of God, and the firmament showeth his *handywork*.' But the stars are cold and reflect no rays of love; their courses are steadfast and answer not the pulses of our passion and our prayer; their spaces are still and

calm as the wilderness, whether our temper is sweet and holy, or heaving in the tumult of the wildest sin."* Now to me, and I am convinced to multitudes of others, glory and handywork are *not* the sole messages of heavens and firmament. Stars are *not* cold; they *do* reflect the thrilling rays of love. In gazing on their steadfast courses, our passions *find* assuagement, our prayers response. The still, calm spaces of the midnight skies attune themselves in celestial harmonies to our sweet and holy tempers; reprove, and soothe, and sanctify to speechless yet sure communion the moods in us that heaved but now in tumult of wildest sin. It is another glory than glory of vastness and might that the heavens declare; they sing the songs of Zion to the yearning heart; and the outstrewn stars which prophets of old fabled to be the angel hosts of God, are truly His phalanx of shining messengers bearing good news of an infinite peace and love to the bosoms wherein found harbour despondency or passion or the great aching doubt.

I desire to maintain that what is beautiful or sublime in nature—and of all such the starry heaven stands the transcendent type—appeals with convincing force to another and a higher faculty within us than that demand for an effective and willing cause which we saw to be native to our minds. These things speak to us, in their own language, of *Love* behind them all. That language we cannot translate into terms of pure reason, but to him to whom it is spoken it is no less forceful with conviction than strictest syllogism of formal logic.

He who says (as so many do) that *reason* is carnal, and

* Hours of Thought, Vol. II. p. 214.

bids us discredit that which pure reason proves, or credit that disproved by reason, is rebel against the inwrought faculties of man, and makes God lie. But it is insurrection no whit less dire against the veracity of the nature by which alone we so much as conceive of truth, to bid us be sceptic of the testimony by which, overleaping logic, things lovely or sublime bear witness of the Eternal Love. The voices of the rose-bud in the hedge, of the stream that gurgles down the shadowy vale, of the mountain-peak that throws back from its snowy crest the roseate light of the declining sun, of the clouds themselves that canopy the great orb's bed, of the silent stars that converse together in the night, of the little birds that make air tremulous with song, of the mighty music that sobs and swells and crashes down the cathedral aisle,—the voices of all these carry knowledge to the awakened heart of man that Love is the law by which all things move, the pulse of the overruling Will, the method of the Purpose which holds space and time together, the texture of that righteousness towards which the Eternal Purpose shapes the sum of force.

All which by divine beauty or celestial grandeur through eye or ear pours messages the highest of which those organs can be vehicles, forms language by which an unseen, enduring, pervading, controlling Love utters itself to our inmost consciousness. Our fitful passion is of a sudden calmed. Our trembling weakness is in a moment transmuted into strength. The sting of our disappointment is healed with a mysterious kiss of peace. Our obdurate sorrow is melted into a strange content. Our torturing

doubt is wrought into a calm assurance. We cannot justify these changes in us by any logic. If one says they are unreasonable, we cannot prove them reasonable. We only know that they are made in us, and that which makes them we can deem no other than sheer *Love.* And to that *Love,* whatsoever it be, they who have felt it give the name of God.

But now, truly marvellous though be this beautiful ministry of nature by its lovely sights and sounds of delight, yet not always dependent is man on sight or sound of external nature for the communication of God's self to his secret spirit. The fulness of a Divine Presence floods our souls at moments, frequent doubtless to the saints, but rare to common men, without any cause that we can detect save the sheer will of the Spirit that thus visits. If with us such visitation is rare and even then but evanescent, we might falter in declaring it to be God that comes to commune with us. But we have the testimony of sages and of saints, of patriarchs and prophets, of Jesus, whose soul was the citadel of truth, that they have been thus visited of God, and that from all such converse they have risen up renewed in the strength of the inner man. And when we, under these experiences, ask from whence this communication that makes new men of us, irresistible impulse replies, "From God."

But irresistible impulse may deceive. It may be contradictory to reason, and reason cannot lie. Is this impulse in accord with reason? Is it a reasonable hypothesis that God pours His love straight into our souls so that it can be felt and known?

God is the name which we have given to the Pervading Will which moves the sum of things towards the Eternal Purpose, the Will also which presses its righteous purpose upon man by that voice which we call Conscience. But, whatever jar there may be between man and God when man acts against conscience and hinders the Eternal Purpose; in a God who is the very Source of all that is, there can be no relation save one of perfect harmony towards the universe that is His creature; and towards all sentient creatures of His there must be a perfect love. No man can conceive God ever willing to call into being a creature He could not love. No motive can be conceived urging the Divine Will to produce, save sheer love. And love must be the moving character of the Eternal Will, the principle of His relation towards us and all moral beings, the motive of His activity throughout the realm of His eternal energy.

But if God be Love, then Love is potent everywhere and always, thrills through the summer air, vibrates in the molecules of matter, penetrates the being of the creatures who are sustained by the ever active energy of God. Love is nearer to us than the air, and closer to us than the warmth. But air we feel about our brow, and the kind warmth permeates our frames. How then should it be that Love alone should have no direct mode of declaring itself to our consciousness? Once realize that Love is the one motive principle of being, and it is not to be conceived that Love, playing all about us, cannot enter into our souls and announce for itself its gladdening presence.

But can God love me, the poor man asks,—me who am

but a speck of dust upon the face of this unbounded cosmos? God sends the sunlight glancing about your hair; He moves the energizing blood through the channels of your body; He ripens each individual grain that goes to make the food you eat; He paints the lily, feeds the raven, holds up the tender sparrow. All this we know, as we have seen, by strictest science. Why, then, may He not bathe you in His beautiful love, you and every fellow-creature of yours the vast cosmos through?

I hold, then—and these are the grounds of my Theism, the supports of that solemn Affirmation of God which I am constrained to make—I hold that by three several faculties, if only we will trust them, we may know God with the most unequivocal certainty of knowledge. First, by that law of our minds which compels us to postulate Will as the fundamental cause of all phenomena; secondly, and more clearly, by His unmistakable voice in the declaration to us of the moral law; thirdly, and this most intimately of all, by His revelation of His love to us either through the beautiful or sublime that meets our eye or ear, or immediately by the sheer speech to us of the Holy Spirit.

It would be natural to pass on now to the discussion of Prayer, the highest form of intercourse between man and God, ever bringing afresh its blessed assurance of His presence and benignant power. But that is wisely reserved for another lecture and another lecturer. I therefore note, before concluding, one or two embarrassments which clog

men's minds and obstruct the free acceptance of Theistic faith.

It is matter of controversy, often raging fiercely enough, whether God be a Person or no. Do you believe in a *personal* God? is the question with which the Theist is perpetually confronted.

Strauss argued that there could be no personal God because there was no room for Him anywhere, all space being already booked for stars or ether. That was the grossest of all atheistic arguments. Others contend that God cannot be personal, because the word "person" implies limitations. Well, if it does, certainly God is not personal. But that is a mere bandying of words. For my part, when I hear the word person, I understand no necessary limitations. But I do not care about the word; I care about the fact: and if God is not personal, He is not less than that, but more. The thing I care about is this, that in God are faculties answering to what in ourselves we name Will, Intelligence, and Love. True, each one of those, as we have common experience of them, is strictly limited. Will has to make painful effort against obstacle. Intelligence laboriously masters gradual knowledge. Love aches at the failure of its desire. But these experiences belong not to the essence of the faculties themselves, but to their association with the conditions under which man finds himself in the world. In itself, Will may coalesce with perfect achievement, and Intelligence may from the first embrace the perfect knowledge of all that is, and Love may never know desire or pain, because it enjoys perpetual and complete fruition. And after this manner we

conceive these things to be in God. And so we will let you call Him Person or Supra-Person, as you will.

In like fashion, people worry themselves over the long word "Anthropomorphic," Greek for man-shaped. Quite truly does Goethe say that man never knows how anthropomorphic he is, how far he is projecting his own characteristics into his idea of God. But that is only to say that we can conceive of no other elements in the Divine Nature than those of which our own nature gives us some conception. No sane and reverent man disputes that there are depths and heights in God from all recognition of which the limitations of our faculties absolutely cut us off. But that need not stand in the way of our recognizing such elements in Him as have some faint correspondence in ourselves. Matthew Arnold ridicules the conception of God as "a Moral Governor of the universe" with as delicate yet assured a mirth as that which he pours out on "the three Lord Shaftesburys." But they who use such phrases do not mean to deck the Supreme with the badge of office like the Governor-general of India or of Canada. Governorship in its own essence implies no limits and no such narrowing conditions as hamper human governors. And the great term "Moral" itself, though with us inextricably associated with struggle and difficulty and gauge of battle, in its essence solely refers to that better choice which we conceive the Divine Being to make always more surely than the needle of the compass points to the frozen North. The phrase is unpoetic, and lacks the wondrous fitness of the phrases thrown out by the prophets of Israel. But in itself it is entirely defensible and just.

It is true, we can but use man-phrases concerning God. We do not pretend that they wholly cover any element in His unsearchable being. But, being men, we must speak as men, and the language of religion will express the truth that lies at the heart of things just so far as it is possible to our faculties to grasp it.

And now, at last, after this long effort to say the simple, knowable truth about God, to make the fullest Affirmation of Him that we can, without resort to the exalted masters of our race who have discerned Him with a brightness and declared Him with a power transcending that granted to common men, we turn with eager joy to the mighty utterances which have come down the ages to us and have kept alive some faith in God even in deadest seasons of religious apathy and fiercest epochs of theological strife. And passing by now all others, Moses with his cry for allegiance to a righteous God, Isaiah and the Psalmists, his great successors, Zarathustra on the far Bactrian plains proclaiming the God who found symbol in the blessed light, we stay to hearken to the word of him who in peasant garb, stooping to gather the lily that blossomed hard by the Galilean lake or pressing weary feet upon the dusty pavements of Jerusalem, declared God, with emphasis and fervour such as never shaped the words from any other lips, to be the *Father* of this human race. That famous Christian doctrine, the Fatherhood of God, with all that it involves of tender care, of wise direction, of intimate and glad communion, of wondrous things prepared for them that love Him,—is it antiquated, effete,

outworn, the figment of a lustrous Oriental fancy, or is it vital, permanent, thrilling to the heart of truth for ever?

It is vital, permanent, thrilling to the heart of truth for ever.

That God is Father: that is anthropomorphic also, doubtless. It is a human phrase striving to speak the gloriously unspeakable. But it is true none the less for that. Human fathers, indeed, are very fallible, finite creatures, as we know them. But the essential conception of true fatherhood—wise, protective, forethoughtful, tender, loving, powerful care—is one that will bear stretching out into the infinities. When the term, coined long ago by an olden psalmist, and turning up even in heathen mythologies, was stamped and made current for ever by the inspired genius of the Christ, it was the very truest symbol that could be uttered of the relation of God to man. For not yet, in those days and climes, had the full, blessed beauty and sacredness of motherhood been recognized, nor had mothers risen to their rightful rank in human reverence. And so all those very marks which in the earlier part of this lecture we laboriously strove to win into our philosophically legitimated Affirmation of God—all-potent Will directed by infinite Intelligence, working towards the consummation of all Righteousness by the method of all-permeating Love—these marks of God were every one set forth and made vivid for the apprehension of all who had ears to hear, when Jesus cast aside the old stern or awful names of Lord, of Holy One, of unutterable Jehovah, and spoke daily with winning accent of the Supreme as our Father who is in heaven.

"Our Father who art in heaven." Still may the litany go up from the generations that cover the face of the earth, and win its answer of consolation to the weeping, strength to the tempted, triumphant hope to them who behold the shadows of the valley of death gathering about their eyes. The prayer is sound philosophy, and perfect poetry, and pure religion to-day and evermore. But let us remember always that deeper than our philosophy, and sublimer than our poetry, and far transcending our little light of religion, is He the infinite Unsearchable, the Eternal all-encompassing Power. To us the dear and blessed Father; so in very truth; but behind that also, as baffled philosophers—wiser than some presumptuous theologians—ever and again confess, the by human thought unthinkable, the by human minds unknowable,—revealed to us so far as He concerns us,—shrouded from us and from every finite intelligence in the unsounded depths of His ineffable reality.

But all that need not trouble us. What man needs here is spiritual assurance of the living, loving God. That assurance rests, not on reasonings concerning that which transcends our reasoning power, but on actual communion of the soul with God, on the positive and personal experience of life, on prayers answered, on strength bestowed, on comfort given, on peace poured into the open heart, on the felt inflow of heavenly grace, on the granted fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual assurance comes not from hearsay, not from subtle reasonings, not from a whole world's united creed, but comes solely from the unutterable, incontrovertible

demonstrations of the Spirit. Men who have been weak, and, seeking God, have found themselves strong; men who have been afraid, and, seeking God, have found themselves fearless; men who have been broken-hearted, and, seeking God, have found themselves all whole of heart and soul; men who have been desolate, and, seeking God, have found a companionship and love above the love of women; men who have been trembling cravens, and, seeking God, have found themselves triumphant martyrs: these, and such as these, and such as these alone, it is that possess or can possess that spiritual assurance which is the dominating, and essential element in real religious conviction. That assurance deals not, it is true, with Trinities or balanced schemes of salvation; it deals not with material Sacraments or printed Words of God with legally protected copyright. It deals with and brings to the minds and consciences of men a Holy Spirit, enduring through all time, enwrapping every place,—a Holy Spirit who, for the tender love He pours over suppliant souls, for His sweet dealings with torn and broken hearts, for the clear image of Himself which He draws in the faces of brave men and loving women and guileless children, likens Himself in our thought to a Father of perfect wisdom and unbounded goodness. This spiritual assurance lodges us consciously in the hand of such a Father, makes us certain of the holiness of moral goodness, and makes us confident of its final victory under the banner of God over all the hosts of darkness that fight for selfishness or sin.

And will you offer me authorized and official creeds in substitution for this spiritual assurance? Will you tell me

I am presumptuous because I rest my belief of religion on God in me, rather than on man around me? Will you send me to Councils of the ancient Church to learn that the soul's upward cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" has response from heaven? Will you refer to the consensus of Presbyters and Priests to prove to me that there is a Spirit about me and within me greater and nobler than I, an Eternal Being, who is the shadow of my shelter, the rock of my everlasting refuge? *That* is the sole theology I want. I ask no more. I will have no less. *That* the consensus of the Churches through the centuries fails to give me, for jarring and discordant voices reach my ear from them every one. But *that* the still communion of my silent chamber has for me, though all Christendom be at feud—as God told his psalmist of old, "Be still, and know that I am God." That is the whisper of the night-star, though theologic strife tear the vitals of the Churches, and atheists gaze on the strife and chuckle. That is the silent song of blue-seaed, grey-rocked, green-wooded Earth, as she steers her pilgrim voyage through starry space, though the tumult of her citizens fill our ears with jangling, and the clash and clang of theologic battle re-echo through the troubled air.

II.

Worship—Prayer.

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I.

Ladies and Gentlemen,—The subject for this afternoon's discourse is that of Religious Worship, including Prayer; and I begin with the remark that in all ages of which we have any certain record, men have been accustomed to worship. In other words, the feelings of dependence and of awe which form the basis of the religious sentiment, and which have found their expression so persistently in acts of worship, appear to be inseparable, in man, from the consciousness of his own existence and of the relations which he bears to the world around him. Such feelings accordingly have been and are among the most sure and abiding characteristics of human nature, and their influence is traceable in the earliest periods to which we can ascend.

But, while this is true, and while it is also true that, in this sense, the Creator has never "left himself without witness" in the hearts of His children, still it is to be

remembered that the primitive feelings alluded to do not of themselves afford any positive or trustworthy knowledge of their Object—for which it is necessary to look to other sources and means of information. Their chief function would seem to be, to awaken thought, to lead men to reflect on the imperfection and frailty of their life and the indications of creative plan and power visible in the outward universe. Beyond this, their teaching cannot be said to go; and we are thrown, in effect, partly upon what has been termed Faith, partly upon the accumulated experience and testimony of past ages, and partly upon the intelligent observation of the world without us, if we would learn more and still more as to what HE is whom we seek to approach with our words and rites of thanksgiving, adoration, and prayer.

Speaking then as from the position of what has been usually termed "Natural Religion," with which only I am here concerned, I proceed to ask, to what knowledge, or idea, of the Object of worship are we led by the sources of information just mentioned, when thoughtfully and rationally applied? To this question my answer must be a short one; as the subject involved belongs more properly to the preceding lecture in this course. I propose to touch upon it only so far as appears to be needed by way of introduction to the special topic which we have now in hand.

Putting aside for the moment the wide-spread polytheistic beliefs which meet our view in the history of Religion (although what I am about to say is true of them also), we may at once pass on to the answer that, amidst endless

variety of thought and imagining, men have been everywhere essentially agreed in making the Object of their worship, not an abstraction, but a *personal* Being—one, that is to say, of moral and intellectual nature like themselves. It has been felt, more or less consciously from the first, that nothing greater or more excellent is known to man than the Mind of man himself; and that nothing, consequently, higher and better could be ascribed to the Supreme than just the same kind of personal, that is, self-conscious, spiritual powers and attributes which belong to the human soul.

Such a conception of God, I need scarcely observe, is neither unworthy of man nor altogether unworthy of its Object. It was at all events the best and highest tribute of acknowledgment which man could give. If it be not absolutely *true*, still we may be well contented to hold it fast, until Science or Philosophy, one or other, or both, and whether under the name of Positivism or any other, shall either give us something better, or shall at least have shown, more conclusively than they have yet done, that it is an unworthy and a false conception.

But in the presence of this personal idea of God, and indeed even as the consequence of it, the low and imperfect character of early religious belief is not to be denied. Numberless expressions to this effect occur in the writings of ancient Hebrews and Greeks, as in those of men of other races. At the same time, traces may be equally found indicating the greatness of the advance which the lapse of time and the lessons of thought and experience did not fail to bring about. Many passages in the Psalms,

in the Prophets, and in the Christian books, as well as in words from Greek and Roman sages, might be cited to this effect; all preparing the way, we may almost say, for that greatest thought of all, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

But however imperfect the forms of early religion, or whatever the limitations and hindrances which attend upon all human thoughts of Him of whom it has been so well said that "silence is our least injurious praise," whatever such difficulties may be, we may, without doubt, rise up to some definite idea of the Divine character and will, far beyond the poor and anthropomorphic notions just alluded to.

In the production of this better knowledge, our own mental nature, with its high capacities of reason, conscience, and affection, is a main factor. Man himself is the great argument for God—man, with his power to think to remember, to love, and to fear; his power to look forward into the future, and backward into the past; to aspire continually upward in devout faith and worship, and upward still to an unseen heaven; these wondrous powers bear witness to their Source, and "their great Original proclaim." But man, by these excellent endowments of his nature, is not alone in thus speaking. There are numberless influences which stream in, as it were, upon us from without, and, even from our earliest consciousness of life and thought, tend uniformly to one result. The teaching and the example of venerated parents and instructors; the firm beliefs and the persistent testimony of nearly all the ages of the past; the endless trials and

vicissitudes of our life, with the ever solemn and affecting mystery of death; added to these, the charm which outward nature so unfailingly exercises over us, filling us with the sense of its own order, beauty, grandeur, and immensity—these common and manifold experiences combine effectually to constrain us to think of, to acknowledge, the unknown Source of all, and to look up to Him as not merely a creative or protoplastic energy, but the all-pervading Mind and Will of this universe. They compel us (must I not say?) to think of Him under the character of self-conscious personality,—as One whose moral and intellectual attributes are shadowed forth to us, however dimly, by what we know of such attributes within our own souls, or perceive in the world of life and nature amidst which we dwell.

And men have *faith* in these promptings of their deepest hearts;—all ordinary men, endowed with the average sensibilities of their kind, have such faith; although it may be true that, just as some men cannot see or hear, so some also appear to be without, or to have somehow lost, the faculty divine by which the vast majority of their fellows are led to believe in God. But nevertheless most men have faith in the substantial result to which they are thus irresistibly led. They are well assured that the great unseen Cause of all causes cannot be of nature inferior to themselves—cannot, therefore, be a blind, unintelligent Force, working indeed from eternity to eternity, but unconscious of its own existence; for it is instinctively felt, nay it is self-evident, that such an original could not in any true sense be the Fountain of *our* being, the Author and

the Giver of the capacities of life, thought, and love, which exist within our own breasts.

Then again there are other considerations which equally go to make up the resulting conclusion as to the Object of worship— such, especially, as belong to the deep-lying sense of our own imperfection, sinfulness, and frailty, and which lead us to think of this Parent Mind as infinitely above us, even though we may feel too that "we are also his offspring." Hence the obvious inference that we are dependent upon Him, that we owe Him our obedience and our reverence as subject creatures.

II.

This brings us at once to the idea of WORSHIP itself— which may accordingly be defined as the conscious act of homage and submission by which the inferior nature looks up to, and acknowledges, and desires, it may be, to please and propitiate its Superior.

From one point of view, Worship might seem to be a needless intrusion of man upon the Sacred Presence. Nothing that we can say or do can affect that Infinite Being. We cannot increase or lessen or correct His knowledge, nor alter the eternal course of those visible laws and operations of physical nature which are the expression of His all-controlling will. Nor ought we, indeed, to desire to alter them; because we are assured that they exist for our ultimate good, and for the good of every order of animated beings affected by them. But still it is altogether in harmony with human reason that man shall bow down in worship. For we know that one

heart draws near to another, one spirit to another, by voluntary seeking, by the exercise of the will, whether manifested by outward action or not; and if the relation between man and God be something of the nature of that between parent and child, then this should entitle us to say that the union and sympathy of man's spirit with God's, the feeling of filial submission on man's side, the reverence and the obedience which he owes to the Author of his existence, should be *expressed*, and further must in some important sense be dependent on cultivation and expression. Human affection as between man and man would die out and cease to exist, did not one side or the other give some outward sign of its existence and of the desire to act in conformity with its dictates. Similarly, even though it were the case that the Divine Spirit itself were ready, so to speak, to recognize, to embrace, to welcome us as children, yet if we, on our side, did not respond, did not seek or care to meet and welcome that advance, there could be no real approach (so far as depended upon ourselves), no true recognition of Spirit and spirit, no glad and voluntary drawing nearer of ourselves to God.

I need scarcely add that the outward *form* by which this expression is made of the soul's desire to draw nearer to God, or the *place* in which it is so, is a matter of very small importance. It may be the secret, unknown prayer or aspiration of the solitary worshipper—even as Christ went forth to pray alone at the midnight hour; or it may be the united strains of ten thousand voices, with every outward accompaniment of grandeur and solemnity rising from the crowded cathedral aisle; it may be the one or the other

of these different outward modes, but in every case the essential and indispensable element will be the earnest feeling of the heart, the desire really living and moving, for a closer union with God, and a truer submission to His supreme Will.

Nor ought we here to leave out of sight the fact that it is not a passing momentary emotion that is in question. It is rather a sentiment deep and strong, which should be seen in its resulting influence on the daily actions, as well as at the instant of praise and worship. The outward, common life which is made to be in harmony with God's will, which is intentionally made to be so because it is believed that such a life will be acceptable to Him, this, it is needless to say, is the best form of devotion to His service, the highest worship which we can any of us render to Him. It is easy, perhaps, at the hour of worship to feel drawn upward, as it were, from earth to heaven by the influence of time and place; easy and pleasant to have such feelings; and we may think at the moment that we do firmly and earnestly desire to give ourselves up to the Divine law, to be and to do whatever that may ask from us. But, alas! this is often but a temporary mood, the product of excited emotion, not durable in its nature, but apt to pass away at the first approach of outward circumstance, leaving all the daily life as cold and as little filled with the thought of obedience to the Infinite will, as it is possible for a human life to be. It is readily seen that transient feelings of devotion such as these can have little worth. We must not be deceived, for "God is not mocked." These impulses of a moment must be guarded and

strengthened by reflection and resolution, and also by habitual expression. For man is too commonly a feeble and changeable being, and he needs support and help of this kind. Such impulses should, above all, issue in worthy actions, in lives, like Christ's, of firm and continuous adherence to what we know to be beneficent and right, and therefore in true accordance with God's will and acceptable to Him.

It cannot, we may even venture to think, be a matter of indifference to the Great Father of all whether our lives are thus faithful to Him or not. If we may conceive of Him as a righteous and merciful Being, everywhere present throughout His universe, as One who, in the ancient and familiar words, "compasseth our path and our lying down," and is "acquainted with all our ways," it must to such a Being be acceptable that we walk uprightly, and that we seek Him in praise and adoration, even in penitence for our sins; while to ourselves, on the other hand, the thought that He is with us, that His blessing is upon us, will be as the sunshine of heaven upon our lives, serving to brighten and to gladden every scene of our mortal existence.

From the earliest times which are known to us, men, as before observed, have been accustomed to bow down in worship. In all ages the multitudes have done this, not so much from any reasoning thought as to *why* or *what* they worshipped, as from the natural sentiment or impulse before referred to, impelling them to outward and formal acts of devotion. But, however true this may be of the early ages of religious belief, as it is of unthoughtful classes

of men in all ages, still the faithful man of these later days may be expected to regulate his actions, not by any blind instinct or feeling, natural or deep-lying though it may be, but by a reasonable regard for *truth*, and for what he has learnt respecting the Object of his trust and veneration. And if "God is a Spirit," then it is right to say that the worship of such a Being will be, not according to one unvarying type or ritual, but as men, from age to age, feel to be most in harmony with their highest conceptions of spiritual existence. Hence it may be said that the secret conscience of each man, his inner sense of what is truthful and becoming before God, will be the law of his worship. This applies also to churches and to each succeeding generation of worshippers. While, therefore, we are faithful to our own convictions, we should not seek to pledge or bind others, or those who shall come after us, either in forms of worship or in articles of faith. And hence, too, there will most probably with advancing time be a growing tendency, on the whole, to greater *simplicity* of outward form and ceremony. The express offering of sacrifices has long been abandoned by all Christian worshippers. Other costly and complicated modes still linger among us; and I would not say one word about them except this—let every man be faithful to his own highest thoughts of God and of what His worship and service demand. But still surely, I may add, it is everywhere, among thoughtful persons, increasingly felt, that He who is a Spirit may best be worshipped with the spirit; or if we say, as indeed we ought to say, "in spirit and in truth," this we can only understand to mean, with the "living

sacrifice" of our outward lives and actions, as well as with the spiritual homage of our hearts.

In reference to the simplicity of form now spoken of, and in recommendation of it, the Lord's Prayer may be appealed to as highly suggestive; and such is also the example of solitary prayer given by Christ. He, we are told, "went out into a mountain to pray apart;" and on another occasion, it is mentioned, he was found "alone praying." Both the Lord's Prayer and the Lord's example should have great weight with Christian men. From both of them we may learn how entirely in accordance with Christ's spirit it is to say that our worship should be simple in its character; and further, that this feature will become more marked as men become more thoughtful and more truly sensible of the Divine nearness to them. And not only this; but how needless it is and even anti-christian to suppose that anything of the nature of priestly intervention is required, or of special rites and forms, to enable the soul of man to draw near to God with the "acceptable sacrifice." We cannot doubt that the Puritan preacher on his hill-side, or the captain of a "salvation army" in the street, or the cottager in his humble room surrounded by his wife and children, may offer the worship that ascends to heaven quite as much as Greek or Roman or Anglican priest, prostrating himself before the high altar of his stately temple. But still, let me say again, while all this is true, we should each of us be faithful, so far as we can, to our own highest ideal of what is becoming or necessary, and we should offer each of the very best that we have to give. If, then, the Ritualist thinks that an

ornate and elaborate service is best, by all means let him give it, and let him be at liberty to give it. In other words, let there be liberty of worship, as well as of thought and speech, for the Ritualist, as much and as complete as for the Quaker or the Methodist.*

In one most important respect, I cannot doubt that the tendency to greater simplicity of worship will increase, and accompany the advance of successive generations towards the higher knowledge of God. Christian men and women will more and more strictly, as time passes on, seek to worship Him who alone is God—the "One God and Father of all." And, indeed, through all the Scriptures, and in all the intimations of the highest reason, there is no warrant and no call for the worship of any other object or being whatever.† No scriptural example or expression authorizes our turning away from Him whom Christ is recorded to have addressed in prayer as "the Only True God," to the adoration of any other being or any other name. Christ himself expressly taught his disciples when

* Perhaps I ought to add, that, if the liberty for which I thus plead cannot be legally given within the Establishment as it is, the Ritualist has the remedy within his own hands. He may do even as the Puritan did, and walk out of an intolerant communion! But some of us may go even so far as to say that the liberty alluded to might be conceded even within the Church as established—so long as it continues to be established.

† In the New Testament several words are used to denote religious worship. It is not without significance that only that one is used in reference to Christ which is also expressive of the respectful homage or obeisance which one man may pay to another—e.g. Matt. xx. 20, comp. Matt. xviii. 26. It should also be noted that no single instance occurs throughout the Bible of the ascription of praise or prayer to the Holy Spirit as a distinct or personal existence.

they prayed to say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and in the spirit of this precept he himself lived and died. Amidst all the apparent reaction and opposition that now seem to be so strong around us, I cannot doubt that this will in coming years be more and more clearly seen by the multitudes of Christian worshippers; or that the tendency will still and increasingly be to that devout simplicity of form and expression, as well as of thought, of which I have been speaking. Thus, in every land and church, what may be termed the simple Christian position on this important point will be abundantly vindicated, everywhere spoken against though it now is, "the Lord shall be One and His name One."

There is some limitation, however, if so it may be termed, to what I have just said on this part of my subject. It arises on the side of *man*. He is not only a religious being, but a being also of flesh and blood, of custom and habit and social feeling. He cannot, therefore, easily or advantageously dispense with outward forms, or times and seasons, or the animating society and sympathy of others. We are social beings, and from one point of view the worship of God should be a united or common worship. For we are the recipients of a multitude of common blessings, children of the same God and Father; and if it be right for even one of us to acknowledge and bow down before Him, it is right for all to do the same, and to help and sustain one another in so doing. A man *may*, it is true, worship apart. *Will* he faithfully and persistently do so? Will not the danger be that he will gradually cease to worship at all, if he have not the sympathy and

the help and strength which sympathy gives, as expressed by the concurrent voices and actions of faithful fellow-men? This inquiry is answered in effect by the tendency and the custom from the most ancient times to union in worship; and this has been truly felt to be natural, reasonable, comforting, and altogether in accordance with the dictates of our best thoughts of God. Thus we come back to the re-assertion of the perfect reasonableness of our worship, whether it be private and individual, or whether it be public and social. But, in either case, the one element that is indispensable is not in the form of it, not in any accompaniment of rites and ceremonies, nor in any reputed sanctity of time or place or officiating person, but only in this, that we each bring to God the offering of true and heartfelt thanksgiving, praise, and penitence; that we honour Him as the Author of all that we are and have; that, striving to find out His will, we give ourselves up unreservedly to His disposal and service.

But here I may next observe, that even the external form of our worship is not absolutely unimportant. It must at least be in harmony with our highest conceptions of the Infinite Power and Greatness, and with the best dictates of that moral nature which is in us by the gift of Him whose "inspiration giveth us understanding." It has always been widely felt that (with some exceptions) the liturgical psalms and prayers of our national Church fulfil this condition in a remarkable degree; while yet it is felt also by many that the constant repetition of the same words gives occasion to something of formality and coldness. Such a result, however, is no necessary accompani-

ment of liturgical forms; and perhaps it should be held that the most desirable method of public worship is that which combines the fixed form of the liturgy, including suitable musical accompaniments of hymn, chant, and anthem, in which all can join, with the free prayer of the minister; which last, because it *is* free, may adapt itself to the changing times and circumstances of ordinary human condition. The usual practice of Nonconformist churches, where one person prays and all the rest listen to him, is it not too much like worshipping by a mediatorial proxy?—one doing for others what they ought at least to join in doing for themselves? But how can they join when they do not know what is going to be said, or when, as sometimes happens, they may even dissent from it, or find it in some way unsuitable to their own private feelings of devout reverence? In such cases there can hardly be any true worship; and this is a danger which must always exist where a congregation is wholly dependent upon the varying moods and utterances of a single individual.

What has just been said as to the danger of arousing merely critical thoughts in the midst of worship evidently applies directly and strongly to the repetition, at such a time, of formal creeds or confessions of faith. Surely, these are altogether out of place in the midst of praise and thanksgiving to God, which are the true essential elements of religious worship. The fact that a body of faithful people are met together for this high purpose, is in truth itself a confession of faith. We may be sure the Divine Father does not need any other, or ask us to tell Him so minutely what we believe. And why need we tell each

other? And are we all quite sure that we believe it all, even if and when we say we do? On the other hand, it is almost inevitable that critical and doubting thoughts should be awakened in many a worshipping mind, in reference to any creed whatever that human pen can write —thoughts which can only be disturbing and weakening at such times.

III.

There remains still a question which is of greater importance than that of the outward forms of worship, and which demands at least a brief notice in the present connection. It relates to the objection which many persons feel to Prayer in any form whatever—an objection to which especial prominence has been given in recent years.

The difficulty referred to is so familiar, that it is unnecessary to describe it at any length. The laws of nature are fixed, constantly operating and all-pervading; nor can we doubt that they are beneficial in their effects, taking in the entire extent and duration of their action. Moreover, they are of Divine appointment, and the expression of the Divine will. Can we then, or ought we, to pray to their Author in such words as will imply that He should alter and regulate these great causes and effects of His natural providence in some way according to our judgment and for our benefit? Moreover, it is urged, as another form of the same objection, such prayers are never in fact answered, never effectual. The patients in a hospital will not recover, have never been known to recover, in answer even to the most prolonged and earnest prayer.

In reply to this, let me observe, all such objections

apply more especially to petitions for outward and material changes and gifts. They do not apply to the expression of devout praise and thanksgiving to God for His daily mercies; nor to the adoration of Him as the Supreme Existence; nor to the utterance of penitential sorrow for sin; nor do they seem to apply to the prayer for spiritual light, strength, and comfort. These last, it cannot be doubted, may come to us without any interference with outward physical laws; even through the immediate contact and influence of the Divine Spirit with and upon our spirits—just as one human mind may inspire and elevate another, quite independently of outward or material circumstances, or even in direct opposition to them. One, therefore, who may hesitate to ask for any material thing at God's hand, need not also refrain from the worship of praise and gratitude, or the prayer for a holy spirit; and I doubt not that this is the deep and earnest feeling of many, or of all who know how to unite religious reverence with the scientific spirit and the active pursuit of truth.

Our answer to the question just proposed must be in general accordance with this position. Obviously, we should ask from God in prayer only what we feel within our hearts it would be wise and worthy in the Almighty Father to bestow. We should ask it in submission to His perfect knowledge, remembering our own short-sightedness and ignorance, gladly leaving the issue in God's hand and seeking to say with Christ, "Thy will be done." With this essential qualification, I do not see why we should not devoutly utter before Him even *all* our natural human wants, desires, aspirations, as weak and dependent crea-

tures. The fact that we do so will itself be an expression of our sense of dependence upon His will. It will tend also to nourish and strengthen this inner sense of communion with the Divine Spirit, if only we will remember that God's wisdom is higher than ours, and that this again may be manifested in simply withholding from us what we may ourselves desire and pray for. We are invited, however, by many such considerations as these to make *spiritual gifts* the burden of our prayers, to ask God for light, strength, guidance, and consolation in the way of life. If we would commune with His Spirit we must before all things do this; and if there be any truth or reality in religious thoughts, such prayers will be abundantly accepted by Him who seeth in secret, and who best knoweth what we need even before we ask.

In illustration I may be allowed again to refer to the Lord's Prayer, and to the example of that earnest Teacher who warns us so carefully against thinking that we shall be heard for our much speaking.

How short, and natural, and self-forgetful is that prayer! Of the six or seven requests which it contains, three only can be said to be personal, that is, for the worshipper himself: of these, one alone is for a material good, and that is of the most common and indispensable kind. "Our daily bread," without which we could not live at all: *this* we may ask God to give us, although, surely, He will do so, even if we do not ask Him. But if we do so, this will at least show that we are dependent upon Him, that we think of Him and acknowledge Him as the great fatherly Providence of all His children. And then, that

example of the Teacher's own prayers in regard to the subject matter of what we should say. How few and unobtrusive and self-forgetful, as before, were the words which, in most cases, fell from his lips! "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And again on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And yet again, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." From such simple and touching words, we may at least learn that the request for things spiritual may best be the burden of our prayers; as from the same impressive teaching we may learn too that the answer of peace will not fail to be given to the earnest waiting soul.*

And, truly, that this is so, have we not the testimony of holy men of old, telling us in countless ways, whether of speech or of action, that it has been even so with them? Have we not the testimony, strong and clear, of many of the best and greatest souls that have lived upon this earth? For, begin with Hebrew prophets of ancient times, and descend even by Greek and Roman philosophers and moralists, a Socrates, a Plato, a Cicero, a Seneca, downward through Christ and Paul and all the martyrs and saints of elder and of later times, and downward still, through Wickliffe, Luther, Milton, Wesley, Wordsworth, Keble, Channing, Theodore Parker, and many more, a numberless host, do not these *all* tell us in effect, and in common with the multitude of meaner men, that the true peace

* The long and elaborate prayer attributed to Christ in John xvii. is very probably the composition of the Evangelist. There is no trace of such a prayer or anything like it in the other Gospels.

and perfectness of human nature shall be found in communion with the Unseen Spirit, in looking up to Him, and living as in His sight, and bending before Him "in spirit and in truth"?

Such testimony as this affords the fittest answer to the question whether prayer ever does meet with acceptance at the heavenly throne, and it should amply serve to justify and sustain the devout man in his worship. But yet he will remember still, and well remember, that prayer and work should go together—that while God may give little to much asking, He will give much to the faithful doing by which it is illustrated and enforced. The religious man will therefore feel, as before, that he can best worship and bow down not merely with outward forms and words, however truthful, reasonable, earnest, or elaborate and costly they may be, but by making his daily life acceptable to God, by making it the active instrument of the same goodness and righteousness which are His most glorious attributes; or, to vary the expression, by seeking and striving, according to Christ's words, "to be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." By this Christ-like and filial obedience, trust, and submission, by this it is, that His spirit is to be brought nearer to ours, to be felt as nearer, and in that felt nearness of the Heavenly Father to give us the strength, the hope, the joy, which are not of this world, the very "peace of God which passeth understanding."

III.

The Supreme Moral Law.

By WILLIAM BINNS.

The Supreme Moral Law is the will of God; obedience to it is the supreme duty of man; and we know what the law is and what we are required to do, by virtue of the energy or faculty called Conscience. Conscience sees the right, as reason sees that twice two are four. In neither case do we need to go through any logical process; we perceive intuitively that the thing is so, and that it cannot be otherwise. I here make plain my fundamental position at the beginning. I shall illustrate it as I go along, and I hope to fairly justify it by the time I get to the end.

Perhaps the statement is satisfactory enough as it stands for the needs of the religious sentiment. Apart from questions of creation and the relation of God to the material universe, with which here we have no concern, in the moral realm all religious men are substantially at one as to what we mean by God. We mean the highest and most excellent Being that we can conceive, and a Being

going beyond our conceptions and realized in Perfection, in which we necessarily believe. The gods many and the lords many of mankind possess this characteristic in common. The types of the Perfection vary, but only as lower and higher altitudes of the same mountain, and step by step we climb by means of them to one summit. However various may be our notions of right, we all agree that if there be a God, His will must be right. When it turns out, as in the course of evolution it sometimes does, that we can imagine a higher and more excellent character than that which we have hitherto ascribed to God, we forthwith drop our old ideas and embrace the new ideas as nearer approaches to the Perfection which nothing can transcend. We say that God, who remains the same from everlasting to everlasting, has permitted us to know Him a little better, and at the same time to reveal the boundless unknown which we need immortality to explore. And when, in the course of our growing knowledge of God, it turns out that some former convictions of right conduct on our parts are seen to be unworthy of Him, without hesitation we leave them behind, and welcome fresh and purer authentic deliverances of the Divine will. We say that men have grown wiser. The higher our conceptions of the perfection of God, the clearer and farther-reaching are the intuitions of conscience; and it always remains that, as religious men, God is to us the Ideal of excellence, and His will is the expression of absolute righteousness.

We are not, however, at liberty to take these truths for granted, and to reason from theology down to human morals. Nor are we at liberty to suppose written revela-

tions that state our duty in heavenly Acts of Parliament, and claim our allegiance with an authority that we cannot gainsay. We must begin in man, and somehow find our way from him to God. We must begin with the moral ideas we have and the moral laws by which we know ourselves governed, and discover the Divine will involved in them, and so win a standard by which to judge the relative value of all professed written revelations. I think in this way that we shall end in the conclusion that God has been present throughout the whole process of the moral evolution of the race, sometimes consciously recognized, and at other times a secret Energy guiding the clouded soul into daylight; and when not expressed, yet always implied and always a necessary factor in the case, like the law of gravitation on which we acted and which blessed us before Newton found it out.

In all moral laws we notice these characteristics: (1) they are laws given to free beings, and (2) they involve a feeling of obligation to obey them. (1) They are altogether different from the laws impressed on the physical universe. Any attempt to explain them that leaves out our freedom and our obligation to obey, is thus beside the mark. The earth has no choice about its revolution. A billiard-ball must cease rolling when its propelling force is exhausted. No doubt there are striking regularities in human conduct, when it is looked at on a large scale. So some philosophers think that necessity belongs to the decisions of the will as much as to the perception of light by a good eye wide open in the daytime. Nevertheless, we know our own freedom. It is a fact of consciousness, below which

we are unable to go without destroying the trustworthiness of our nature. If we lie under any necessity at all, it is essentially another kind of necessity from that of physical nature, and we only mislead ourselves and corrupt our judgment when we call it by the same name. We ought to do this thing, yet we have it in our power to refuse to do it, and to do the contrary, or something else more or less different. Here is conscience in the presence of a duty. Here is an unfailing element in moral activity. We ought; but we are free, and we may not.

(2) Moral laws come to us with the authority of a Superior whose right to rule we at once recognize, and they point to a personal Source from which they emanate. They disclose a Divine Superior in whom they have their final and their only adequate interpretation. To their commands we may answer "Yes" or "No," but it is really "Yes" or "No" to God. Religious minds spontaneously translate the voice of conscience into the voice of God; and a more roundabout yet equally inevitable logic lands us in God as the sanction of utility, and the primal authority on which every other authority, so far as it is moral, must rely for the rightfulness of its sovereignty. Ought, at last, always means God. I do not say that we are always aware of the meaning, only that it is involved, and sooner or later we are sure to meet with it.

Apart from God, a moral law is a felt obligation arising within, or imposed from without and afterwards seen within. The inward perception is indispensable. On this purely human basis, without reference, or without conscious reference, to the deeper divine basis below, we may

construct fairly working moral systems. The addition of the idea of God does not alter the details of duty to any appreciable extent. But it intensifies the feeling of obligation. It imparts a glow of enthusiasm. It kindles reverence and love. It makes morality religious. A passionate panting of the soul after completeness, and after some perfect one to listen to, will not let us rest until we reach God, and then we are at peace.

Moral laws, then, are laws which free beings ought to obey, and in their highest interpretation they are our intuitions of the will of God. This conclusion, necessitated by the totality of the deliverances of consciousness, must accompany all theories of conduct. It explains right and wrong, piety and sin, the sanctity and authority of conscience, and the holiness of God.

Modern anthropologists and sociologists, led by Mr. Herbert Spencer, are accustomed to seek for the germs of the present condition of things in the past, and to show how what now is is the offspring of what has been before. The method is sound enough, within limits. But there is a prevailing tendency to push it too far. And we push it too far when we say, or imply, that the whole meaning of a thing is to be found in the ideas of people who were only acquainted with the rudiments of the knowledge that we have acquired since. They had a dim glimmering of the truth in morals and religion. Nobody would propose to shut science in to their dim glimmerings; why then should we shut morals and religion in? The meaning of glimmerings is in the fact that they are prophetic of the growing, and at last of the perfect day, and they are good

for the sake of what they point to, rather than for the sake of what they are in themselves.

We may therefore expect to find that religion is appealed to as the ultimate sanction of morality in the earlier stages of civilization. And this is really the case. The gods are the guardians and also the authors of tribal morals, and the priests speak in their name. Prophets, rightly or wrongly, believe themselves the mouthpieces of a divine power, and the people hear them with awe because they in their turn believe that the prophetic claim is true. Moses and Numa and Mahomet read aloud, with more or less of fulness, the natural language of the conscience. They invented nothing. But they felt constrained to say that they read what God had beforehand written. Imperfection in their readings, and in the readings of barbarians, does not seriously affect the argument. Both science and morals are always imperfect in the nature of things, and religion shows us their imperfection more clearly, for it looks to the infinite and eternal, which stretch beyond the range of sight and draw the imagination onward by ideal suggestions of a reality in itself for ever inscrutable. The reasoning that would help morals and yet eliminate God, goes the wrong way to work, and undermines its own foundations. He was there at first. We do not outgrow Him in evolution; we rather grow in acquaintanceship with His ways. Thought does not burst the bubble of divinity, as Comte pretends, and leave us alone with humanity. Its progress is more like the astronomical penetration into the boundless extension of space. It is the detection of divine life

where earlier there seemed to be only emptiness and death. The savage foretels Jesus Christ.

There is, however, a startling diversity in the moral ideas of men, and we must face this initial difficulty. At first sight it seems to negative a supreme law coming directly from God, and to throw us back on caprices found useful; then, because of their usefulness, growing into customs, and afterwards enacted as regulations needful to social well-being by the political power. The diversity is indisputable. We need not disgust curselves by a recapitulation of the abominable notions and habits sanctioned by the morality and religion of the ancient world and existing barbarism. Writers on the evolution of morality regale us with this sort of food *ad nauseam*. Our complaint is, that they make too little use of the better cookery of modern times. There are cannibals and polyandrists, and nameless savages worse than they. The very gods are often devils, and their worshippers devil-worshippers. There is hardly a crime which has not among some people been reckoned virtue, hardly anything we call a sin which some priests have not called piety. What then? Are we, with the Atheist, to deny God, or to say that we no longer need such an hypothesis in morals? Are we, with the Agnostic, to say conscience knows nothing of a Divine Lawgiver, and to see no trustworthy tokens of His presence in history? Are we, with the purely human moralist, to account for the phenomena as if God were not there, and say it makes no difference whether He be there or not? Or is it possible to discern Him moving on the face of the waters, the wildest vagaries

of morals bearing some sort of witness to a Supreme Law, and to its origin in a Supreme Will?

In varieties to find a common type is a part of our problem. Here we have only to remember the methods of physical science, and adapt them to our purposes. Whether he be red, yellow, black or white, man is still man. One law determines the development of languages. English dialects belong to the "tongue that Shakspere spake." The Aryan races have everywhere the same roots. However differently they may guess at the beginning of speech, I suppose all philologists would admit that articulate-speaking man utters his Babel of sounds in one fashion, and that indeed the Babel is harmony when we hear it rightly. The peculiarity of moral laws, as laws for free souls which ought to be obeyed but may be disobeyed, leads us to expect variety in their interpretation and application. Yet there remains an underlying unity, and conscience tends to manifest itself according to a common type.

Between the varieties of the deliverances of conscience and those of reason there is a likeness that may throw some light out for us. It is undeniable that reason is built on a common type. In some men it attains greater fulness of expression, and in others less; but the laws of thought are the same in Bacon and in ourselves, and they are not departed from even by the lunatic. There is method in all madness. We reason in the same way, by observing causes and effects, by noting likenesses and unlikenesses. Our reasonings clash without affecting the unity of the type of reason, and nothing, so far as we can

see, has been added to or taken from its original equipment. The science of one age may be the superstition of the next, yet reason is not out of tune and discordant in its nature on that account. If all the facts were given, and looked at free from bias, and reason were in every case of equal strength and clearness, we take it for granted that all men would come to the same conclusions about the facts. This is a native belief. If it were not so, words would be waste breath, and writing would be hieroglyphics for the blind. All the facts, however, are not given in every case, nor is there an absence of bias, nor is the reason ever of exactly equal strength and clearness in any two men. The common type stands firm and fast, but it varies infinitely—here it is a little lower than the angels, and there it is just a step above the brute.

It is the same with conscience. And, after all, conscience varies less than reason varies. The common type contains the germs of the Supreme Moral Law, and in due season they are manifested in fuller power and life and harmony. In both cases, the varieties, so far as they conflict with one another and deliver contradictory verdicts, are tending to disappear. Taken broadly, the conscience of Christendom sets up one ideal standard, however it may fall short in reaching it; and when it does fall short, it will mostly be found that reason has overpersuaded it to deny itself. Barbarian tribes, as they rise to civilization, accept the morality of civilization. They recognize the authority of such precepts as, "Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye also to them." They love counsels of perfection. They feel that

there is the true law of our moral being. We may thus summarize moral evolution. There is a common type of conscience, manifested variously, yet always marked by a feeling of obligation and tending to one end. Through conflict to harmony, through liberty to balanced order, through variety to unity—such has been, and such will be, the moral history of man. The new outlooks of the more advanced spirits open for them further prospects into the surrounding heavens, and the rank and file of the army toil after them, and bow before the same law of wider duty, when once they gain the point where it can be seen. Seeing it, all acknowledge its authority. Obeying it is left to the decision of the will; and as we obey or disobey, we are wise or foolish, righteous or wicked.

When the tendency to a final unity is granted, as it generally is—and we all show that we believe in it by labouring to educate the conscience—the existence of the tendency is sometimes accounted for by human agencies alone. It is supposed that experience, or the inheritance of the experience of ancestors, is sufficient to explain all that needs explanation. But this does not satisfy the religious sentiment, which invariably links morality to God. Nor does it provide any adequate genesis for conscience, and its sense of subordination to a rightful authority. I deny not the co-operation of these causes. Why should I? For all causes are of God. Yet a dim intuition of a higher path, in the presence of a lower path, is in us at the beginning, and in the rudest men. This is the rudimentary conscience we start with. It is a glimpse of the will of God, and it grows until everywhere we see light in the

light of God. Human moralists may call this superfluous poetry. I call it the offspring of inspiration and logic. In divine twilight we begin, and towards divine daylight we go.

Our two-fold result is—(1) Moral laws are laws given by God to free beings, and they bear the stamp of righteous sovereignty, against which we may rebel, but which we know and feel we ought to obey. (2) There is a common type of conscience as there is a common type of reason, manifested in divers degrees, yet kindred in its aims, tending to universality, God-given and God-seeking.

The temple of humanity is thus lit up by the eternal radiance of the Most High. Round about the altar it plays in brightest glow, and through the storied windows richly dight the broken sunshine gleams, and in the corners shadows linger, but no part of the temple is left in utter darkness. And if we are a temple wherein God dwells, and if it be His will that we see in our moral intuitions, and if He be the ultimate Source of the reflected divinity of conscience, we ought to be able to find some conscious or some unconscious reference to Him in every moral rule of conduct. On a superficial view, the rules may appear to be generalized from individual experiences; or we may act on them because they are propounded by outward authority, legal or otherwise; or they may seem to spring up, we ask not how, from within; and in ordinary cases we may not care to probe deeper for their meaning. Yet it should be possible to show, and in philosophy we are bound to attempt to show, that these are really all different names for the same thing. From their stand-

points we see aspects of truth, crescent-shaped and genuine enough, but not the full round orb. For that we need the clear shining of God. Men profit by the sun when they paint, without much thinking concerning it; but they are forced to consider it when they want to construct a theory of colours. And God profits us in moral activity when we do not think of Him; but if we want to construct a complete theory of morals, He is the necessary foundation. I grant the practical convenience of what is called independent morality, and the abundant sanctions for right-doing to be found in human courts, without direct appeals to Heaven's chancery. What I insist upon is, that this so-called independent morality, on closer examination, turns out to be of a dependent character. The sanctions of human courts rest on the delegated authority of a higher and divine Court; that is, the moral law finally reveals itself as a declaration of the will of God, or as an utterance of the mind of the Perfect Being, who is the Absolute Righteousness everlastingly energizing, "blowing under foot in clover, shining over head in stars," the infinite Soul communing with the finite soul, and commanding it to come up higher. Let us see.

I said, "The Supreme Moral Law is the will of God." It is desirable to re-assert this, as far as possible, in strictly human terms. Now the Shorter Catechism of the Church of Scotland presents us with an intermediate definition. It asks, "What is the chief end of man?" And it answers, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." Translating this admirable semi-theological and semi-human statement into the language of independent

or human morality, we may render it thus: The chief end of man is to create in himself a character higher than his present character, and tending towards a perfect character, of which he has waking dreams that evermore hint at something beyond what he has already realized. In the midst of innumerable divergences of detail, all moralists who have had the fine ambition after an organic system of morals, have either anticipated the central thought o the Shorter Catechism's answer, in its human or its theological bearings, or else they have modified it. I remember no instance where it has been quite thrust out into the cold. At the heart of what the men say, this is what Hobbes and Paley mean by their contention for the supremacy of selfishness. Bentham, the two Mills, and their followers, defend utilitarianism on the same ground. It is confessedly the aim that Mr. Herbert Spencer sets before himself in the application of his theories of evolution. And as for the various intuitional moralists, however they may define the nature of morality, and whatever special name they may choose to give to the law which conscience feels bound to obey, they all seek to promote the creation of a perfect character in the moral subject. Ancient moral philosophers, and also religious teachers, can hardly have the purpose of their doctrine better or more generously stated than in the language of the Shorter Catechism. What a perfect character is, is another matter. How we shall picture that to ourselves depends on many things. Each nation, each political party, each religion, introduces lights and shades of its own. Even Christ's precept, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is per-

fect," is susceptible of very different interpretations. To be perfect as Calvin's Father in heaven was reckoned perfect, would be a small affair. The fact is, that while we seek perfection, we are yet unable to form any clear idea of it, and our seeking it consists in always seeing something better beyond us. *This* we see clearly enough. And when we have won the something better, we see a better still, clearly also. The perfect shines afar off. Trying to clutch it at once, we are babies crying for the moon. If we do the duty that lies next to us, we are on the right track. We know that perfection exists in God, and that our own life ought to be "one perpetual growth of heavenward enterprize." In this respect, in the provision which they make for endless evolution and for transfiguration from glory to glory, the moral systems which rest on a religious basis have an immeasurable advantage over moral systems which rest on a purely human basis. Humanity may some time be exhausted; God cannot be. The moral faith of Comte dies a natural death, and prepares for its decent burial beforehand. The moral faith of Christ renews its strength like the eagle, and helps us to rise out of the valley of the shadow into light divine. Nay, more. The light divine lingers after men fancy it has gone out, and they guide themselves by it when they profess to need no guide save their own spirit; for the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, and testifies to the Perfect in Him, some likeness to which conscience commands us to seek for ourselves.

There are three main schools of moral philosophy: (1) the school that makes self-interest supreme; (2) the

school that makes utility supreme; (3) the school that makes conscience or moral intuition supreme. The desire for a perfect character, fashioned according to the type of the highest excellence, possesses them all. Conscience or moral intuition is alive in the two first schools, notwithstanding they pretend to be able to get on without it; and the whole three schools involve God, though only the school of conscience or moral intuition ostensibly considers Him a necessary postulate of moral laws.

Take Hobbes and Paley to represent the selfish school. No one of note now follows them. Yet it is not long since Paley was the standard authority of Cambridge and the Church of England. And both Hobbes and Paley have still some practical influence. Their philosophy furnishes a ready explanation of many actions, if we are content to satisfy ourselves with what seems to lie on the surface, and especially if there be an inclination in us to act basely, and so to imagine that other persons are even such as we are. Hobbes had a God, such a God as was possible to a consistent admirer of the Stuarts. So had Paley. But Hobbes's God was an incarnation of arbitrary will, and Paley's was a cunning contriver of the universe. Neither of them supposed God to be directly concerned with human morality, or to write His holy law in the conscience of man. With Hobbes, morality consists of legal regulations to keep savages in order, who would otherwise be in a state of constant war. With Paley, it is a petty-cash account. And yet we shall see that even the selfish system, as expounded by them, has some inkling of the divine root of morals, and carries with it

logical implications which condemn the system itself as utterly inadequate to explain the full significance of moral phenomena. I will not quote them. I will paraphrase and credit them with the best that their philosophy is capable of producing.

We ought to seek, so they both substantially argue, to promote our personal interest in all that we do. When we do good to others, it should be for the sake of some reflex advantage to ourselves which we can gain no way else, such as winning the favour of the political rulers, or buying everlasting happiness. Even our service of God should be a calculation of personal profit and loss, with the balance on the profit side. And in fact this is what we actually do. There is no such thing as disinterested beneficence. Self is never forgotten. Job does not serve God for nought. Satan is a sound reasoner. He knows human nature. Duty is another name for the subtle service of self. The love of humanity is a euphemism for self-love. We kneel before God because kneeling is a paying investment. The trail of the serpent is over us all, and always over us, yet we may be naked in our selfishness and not ashamed. For really we ought to deify the serpent. In the creature creeping on its belly and eating dust, there is the disguised deity, and the hisses are moral commandments. When we make the best we can of things for ourselves, in the end that turns out best for everybody. God is for us all in and through every one being for himself.

To say the least of this philosophy, it displays some obliquity. It is true that our real personal interest is one

with the interest of humanity and the glory of God. But it is not true that we shall find it by seeking it alone. In hosts of cases we find it by forgetting it, or by doing what its short sight forbids, because we feel we ought. It is truly enough said, "we ought to seek personal interest." Whence comes this foreign word "ought"? The theory is not competent to provide it in a legitimate fashion. "Ought" is just conscience in a fog, and confounding the relative size of the objects on which it looks. If we profess to borrow its authority from human law-makers, we have to ask, where do they get their authority? Not from force, for that alone is unmoral. They in turn get it from conscience, and conscience repeats the commands that it receives from a higher source. Hobbes and Paley fall back on the Bible writers, and the Bible writers fall back on the will of God, and the will of God is conscience illuminated by the Father of Lights. The teachers of the selfish school stand on the rocks and spin ropes of sand. The sands drop back into the sea, and the rocks remain.

The utilitarian school, variously represented by Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and Mr. Herbert Spencer, inhabits a better land and teaches a healthier doctrine. With Paley, in spite of his archidiaconal robes, we never get out of the atmosphere of Seven Dials; with Hobbes, in spite of his royal patron, we are in a convict settlement. Moderately-disposed sinners might undertake missionary enterprize, and haply convert the author of the Evidences of Christianity to the gospel, and put a hook of grace into the jaws of the author of Leviathan. Bentham, however, is an apostle of philanthropy. John Stuart Mill makes

utilitarianism a scientific version of the golden rule of Christ. Mr. Herbert Spencer's ethical teaching is a splendid attempt to apply ideal morality to life. It is their philosophy of morals, rather than their precepts and practices, that fall short.

So long as we simply inquire, *what* ought men to do? they are, in the main, excellent instructors. When we inquire, *why* ought men to do it? they fail us. From the exhaustless moral atmosphere they draw wind enough to swell the pocket-handkerchief sail of a pleasure-boat, yet that leaves an East-Indiaman motionless on the waves; and at the same time they ignore the atmosphere from which they draw their supply, and profess to create the air they blow. We ought to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Granted. No doubt we ought. The command is good, but vague. By what standard are we to judge of happiness? Not by quantity, but quality; and quality, conscience determines. And by what manner of arithmetic are we to know the greatest number, when we come into direct contact with so few out of the thousand millions?

Here Bentham loses his way, and later writers of the same school, to save themselves, soon dismiss their guide and start off on new routes of their own. Pleasures and pains are the sole capital of Mill and Spencer, as they are of Bentham. Yet Mill and Spencer do a much more respectable kind of business with them. They have other motives, besides consciously seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, that he knows nothing of, and they aim at distant ideal ends that he would call moonshine. The style of

life and range of duties inculcated in Mill's Utilitarianism, and the fulness and completeness of energy, animated by a duly proportioned egoism and altruism, taught in Mr. Spencer's Data of Ethics, might furnish lessons well worth the study of theologians who boast a surer oracle. They both plainly feel the reality of moral obligations. A calm and rational enthusiasm possesses them when they talk of duties and of the things that *ought* to be done. But duties to whom? And ought!—why? To use these words is to assume a moral law. Sentences where they occur are elliptical, and conscience and God need to be supplied in order to complete the sense. Mill and Spencer silently do assume the law, work wonders with the assumption, and fancy they elaborate it out of nothing, or, what for moral purposes is the same, out of sentient experiences transformed into their opposites. But duty and ought are indecomposable by utilitarian chemistry.

Bentham, therefore, hated the pretentious words. He knew well the havoc they made, and was wiser in his generation than Mill and Spencer, if less fine. He says: "The talisman of arrogance, indolence, and ignorance, is to be found in a single word, an authoritative imposture. It is the word 'ought.' 'Ought or ought not,' as circumstances may be. Indeed, by you ought to do this, you ought not to do it, is not every question of morals set at rest? If the use of the word be admissible at all, it ought to be banished from the vocabulary of morals." As a pure utilitarian he is right; and it is a sad misfortune for the utilitarian system that human nature will neither part with the word nor the idea.

We ought to do all the good and beautiful things that Bentham, Mill, and Spencer tell us to do, if we believe they are good and beautiful; and more as soon as we see more. Yet not merely because we shall thereby diminish pains and increase pleasures. The motive is conspicuous by its absence in much of our activity, and in it alone there is no special moral element. Partly we ought to do good and beautiful things to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, though what seems to be the greatest happiness may be unmoral or immoral, and we cannot calculate the greatest number accurately. Besides, it is the peculiar charm of heroism, generosity, nobleness, love, self-forgetting devotion, to be uncalculated, spontaneous outbursts. This is admitted. So we are told only to calculate in a general way, and, for the rest, to rely on settled healthy moral habits, and inherited instincts disciplined by experience and growing clearer. The new answer still does not solve the problem. For why should we rely on certain habits and instincts rather than others? Deeper than utility, while including it, there is something that utility only partially explains. There is conscience, a faint or bright recognition of the absolute righteousness of the will of God which we are bound to obey, always implied, and, whether openly stated or not, still a living power, and the final interpretation of the authority of morals.

The selfish and utilitarian systems shut the house-door against conscience in vain. It finds a way through the narrow keyholes of Hobbes and Paley, and through the wide windows that Bentham, Mill, and Spencer leave open; and personal happiness and utilities, that ruled

before, soon learn to marshal themselves under it. We take it for granted in our common talk. Its law is written within—in invisible ink, it may be; yet it comes to light when held before the fire of experience, and at last men see that the law is in a universal language. Finally, we fare well personally when we obey it, and all utilities and energies and full harmonies of life follow in the train of its servants, because all things work together for good to them that love God. Yet we render allegiance to it for its own dear sake alone—not for what it brings, but for what it is. It is supreme. "Had it might as it has right," as Bishop Butler says, "it would rule the world." In us it has right only. The will of God which it announces has both might and right. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Abraham asked. Conscience responds in the affirmative, and so foretels universal rejoicing in universal equity and righteousness. We may partly define it by illustrations. It is a kind of inward voice, not our own, but coming from above; a kind of inward light, yet a light of a landscape stretching into infinity. The voice is the voice of God heard in the music of the soul; the light is the light of God beheld in eternal day.

While, however, "do what is right," "do what you ought to do," and "so render obedience to the will of God," is the final statement of the moral law, we may not shut out other considerations. For conscience, though it hear and see, and is bound to act according as it hears and sees, may yet be taught to hear more distinctly and to see a fuller revelation of duty. To create a character of perfect excellence is our end. And in this relation

there is scope for reason to exert itself indefinitely, and there are endless opportunities for the quickening processes of education. What kind of conduct will best tend to secure the end that we desire? How best may we remove hindrances that bar our way onward? And what, after all, is the true conception of a character of perfect excellence? On all these points we have been learners from the dawn of history. We hive up our experience. We treasure the experience of our ancestors. We profit by the lesson of their failures. We build on the foundation of their successes. What they discovered in the moral world is inherited by us. And we take a wide sweep of view over the consequences of actions which we can plainly foresee before they come to pass. How they will influence ourselves, and how they will influence others, are not questions to be left out of sight. Perfect excellence of character is life in harmony with the universal life; it is life in harmony with God. So there is a science of conduct which studies this, and gives precepts, and formulates laws of proper and wise action. The more we know of the interdependence of men and of the stream of tendency in deeds, all the better it is for us, and the sounder are the deliverances of conscience likely to be; the more of God's speech shall we hear, and the more of God's light shall we see. Egoism may teach us something of duty in the lower classes of the divine school where we are pupils, and utilitarianism may teach us much in the higher. They are admirable assistant schoolmasters and rational servants of conscience. It is their business to collect facts. And then, with all the

facts before us, we decide what our moral activity shall be. This result, we say, will follow, and that result will follow; so far we shall serve ourselves, so far we shall serve others; so far we shall promote personal and universal excellence of character, and so far the contrary; so far we shall serve God, and so far we shall rebel; and, after we have deliberated on all, and put one thing against another, and estimated the final outcome, there arises a feeling of obligation selecting one form of activity out of the myriad of possible forms. This is the deliverance of conscience; before this we bow, and there is an end of it. God has spoken, and nothing more remains to be thought or said; it only remains to obey.

A good citizen is loyal to the State, but he is not always thinking of loyalty. Loyalty becomes a habit of life, and is practised spontaneously. A religious man does all to the glory of God, but he is not always thinking of the glory of God. Piety is a settled habit of the soul, and the indwelling divine presence on which it reposes only wakes up into consciousness in rare moods. So a man growing towards perfect excellence obeys the supreme moral law, but he is not always appealing to the judge and begging for an authoritative declaration of duty. Most of his activity is instinctive; he does not reason, he does not calculate, he does not decide; he behaves according to a blessed nature, and conscience steps in and weighs down this scale and sends up that when there is a conflict. Actions are sometimes motiveless. Many things we do without thinking at all, and they may be in their consequences among our worst or best. Others, again,

are motiveful, and may be morally good, bad, or indifferent. Many things we do because they will advance our personal interest; and these, when they do no harm, are innocently selfish and morally indifferent. Many things we do because they promote the general good, and these are praiseworthy in the degree in which we have a high conception of the general good. Many things we do without considering either personal interest or the general good, but because we feel they are right, and these are the instinctive moral actions of simple and beautiful souls. And when personal interest and the general good and the sentiment of right coincide, actions performed under their joint inspiration approach as near perfection as human actions can. Here the question of supremacy is not raised, and there is no case of conscience, strictly speaking.

Should there be a conflict between higher and lower impulses, conscience appears authoritatively on the scene. If personal interest and the general good conflict, conscience decides for the general good. A thorough-going utilitarian, cast in a noble mould, would sacrifice himself to humanity, after careful consideration. When personal interest has been subordinated to the general good, if conscience should still command another course, every man would feel bound to obey conscience.

Out of the storm of conflict, it is born into vigorous life and the assertion of the rightful supremacy which may not be disregarded on pain of leaving all motived actions morally baseless and worthless. Years may pass, and we may not have to choose whether we will be servants or rebels. We may live in a high and serene realm which

baser impulses visit not, and so be above the struggle; or in a commonplace realm, where conventionalism is consecrated, and we are just decent like the rest; or in a conceited realm, where we worship our own caprices, and each impulse is allowed authority because it is ours. When two desires contend which shall be master, conscience steps forth out of its obscurity. It sees there is a higher and a lower in them, and commands us to silence the lower with a "Get thee behind me, Satan;" and to obey the higher with a joyous cry, "To Thee, my God, to Thee!" Sometimes the command to act is given immediately; and if there be any weighing of the relative rank of motives at all, it proceeds so rapidly that we are unconscious of it, and only understand that we have gone through a struggle, and gained a victory or endured defeat, when we feel the after joy or shame. It may be that, of several contending motives, each would rightly prompt to action if the other were absent, and right is wrong in the presence of a higher right, as a narrower utility is injudicious in the presence of a broader utility. Reasoning clears the mind and gradually eliminates unimportant elements. The numerous different courses that we may adopt are reduced to several, and we have to choose at last between two. One of the two we see to be higher, and to that we ought to yield. It is our duty. Reason begins the process, and conscience ends it.

We may be told that conscience does not always decide for the highest after all. It has sanctioned human sacrifices to gratify the Deity. It established and defended the Inquisition. It has maintained the righteousness of

religious persecutions in Protestant countries. It has counselled crimes and sanctified sins numberless. And wisdom, later born, has saved us when conscience blundered. There is a semblance of truth in this. Of course, conscience does not always decide for the highest of all. It is enough if it decide for the higher of the two motives which are present and contending for the right to determine what is to be done. Personal interest, reason, utility, and the philosophies and sciences, may have presented the facts of cases inadequately. It is not the business of conscience to judge whether or not the facts really be as stated, or to reckon the consequences that are to be expected from actions; this belongs to the intellectual side of our nature; and conscience simply looks at the mental pictures placed before it, and says, "If the thing be thus or thus, then the path of duty lies here and not there; this we ought to do, and that we ought to leave undone." The verdict of the judge is right according to the testimony of the witnesses. When the witnesses give false evidence, wittingly or unwittingly, blame them and not the judge.

Reason and utility blundered, and not conscience, in the matters of the Inquisition and religious persecution. They pretended that certain theological opinions were essential to salvation, and that heretics were not only going hellward themselves, but seducing others who, but for the heretics, would land safe in heaven. Reason and utility argued, "If the heretics alone were concerned, it would not be needful to interfere. But if heresy were stamped out, myriads now threatened with destruction would be

redeemed." It was a question of theological science. As put before conscience, the question came to this: whether is it better to burn for half an hour the few who are sure to be burned for ever, or to postpone the eternal burning of the few, and let them have crowds of converts to heresy to share their eternal burnings with them? The choice was between two evils; of two evils, the lesser evil is good by comparison. And conscience in recommending the burning of the few at once was right. We know now that heresy cannot be so stamped out, and reason and utility went astray. We know that a false character was given to God, and theological science was wrong. Conscience did the best that could be done in the circumstances in which it was placed. And if we tell the whole truth to it, it will always do the best.

While we are the creatures of physical appetite, conscience slumbers. When we are born anew into intellectual and emotional activity, it makes fitful appearances with a mystic sacredness all its own. When we are tried by temptations, and when lower and higher forms of good, or good and evil, battle for control, it decides for the good against the evil, and for the higher good against the lower. When we are perplexed by complicated forces and cannot see our way to the outcome, between two possibilities it chooses one, and that turns out to be the best. It chooses the one, not because it understands why it is the best, but because it perceives it to be the higher and nobler, and what it accepts in obedience is verified by experience. Whatever its primal source may be, it is sovereign. Whatever may work together with it in the miscellaneous company

of faculties, it is supreme. When "I ought" or "I ought not" is pronounced, self-interest, reason, utility and evolution, all learn to obey, and find there the secret of what moral authority they have. If they are the schoolmasters of conscience at first, they sit submissive at its feet at last. For it is a glimpse of the glory of God brightening to perfect day; it is a whisper from Him preluding universal harmony. And he who is faithful to it in a few things, shall become ruler over many things, and shall attain to a finite excellence one with the infinite excellence of the Father.

There is no law above the inward law which demands a character in man according to God's idea of a man, and all interlopers may be thrust aside when they usurp its authority. It may not always be worldly wisdom to obey it, in the short reckonings that worldly wisdom is prone to make, but it is a necessity of the excellence of character for which we are made, and disobedience is true damnation. Said the law courts of the United States, "These fugitive slaves shall be sent back from free Boston to bondage." Answered Theodore Parker, "By God's help, no; there is a higher law than yours, and it shall reign;" and in his days of suffering he saw the prophetic dawn of the victory that has since come. Said the Parliament of Charles II., "You shall say the things that you believe are not true; you shall seem to be what you are not." Answered the two thousand ejected clergy, "By God's help, no; there is a higher law than yours, and we will accept its hardships in the wilderness, and spurn your flesh-pots of Egypt;" and they were first mar-

tyrs and afterwards an inspiration. Said Rome, "You shall recant and obey the Pope, the vicegerent of Jesus Christ on earth." Answered Luther, "By God's help, no; there is a higher law than yours; I can do no otherwise than I am doing. Here I stand; God help me. Amen;" and the help came, achieving the emancipation of Teutonic Europe, and offering us the freedom of the City of God. Said the orthodox churches, "You shall make science square always with the Bible; it shall teach you the age of the earth, and the antiquity of the human race, and the order and disorder of nature." Answered the men of science, "By God's help, no; there is a higher law than yours; it can never be right to lie; it can never be religious to deny a fact;" and now the universe is a diviner temple than of old; the forces of nature are the manifested activity of the Creator and Sustainer;

> "At the roaring loom of time they ply,
> And weave for God the garment we see Him by."

Said superstition, "Thou shalt sacrifice thy son a burnt-offering to me." Answered Abraham, "By the help of God, no; there is a higher law than yours; no voice shall silence that inner voice I hear; no power shall force me to extinguish fatherly love; no command shall abrogate the command within;" and he set his foot on human sacrifices, and became the Father of the Faithful of a new race of men, and this rise above superstition God counted to him for righteousness. Said many of the priests of to-day, "You shall call that good and wise and just in God which you would not call good and wise and just in man." Answered John Stuart Mill, "By the help of God,

no; wisdom, justice, and goodness shall mean for me with reference to God what the same words would mean with reference to man; and if I must go to hell for that, to hell I will go;" and he became a child of Abraham.

So has it ever been. And the world has been ever anew redeemed and lifted up by the servants of the supreme moral law of the will of God revealed in conscience. They counted aspiration after an ideal excellence of character at once their sovereign duty and their sovereign joy, and gave glorious chase to persecution, and for the sake of truth and righteousness and God, determined, dared, and did true and righteous and Godlike things. Rewards they sought not, but rewards they have. They are the stars we shape our course by. They summer high in bliss upon the hills of God. They have joined the choir invisible. They are for ever with the Lord; with Socrates, the Light of Greece; with Buddha, the Light of Asia; and with Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

As there is darkness because there is light, and rebellion because there is freedom, so there are shortcomings and sin in man because there is perfection in God. Why is it so? The religious answer is this: Because it has so pleased God. Might the moral government of the universe have been better arranged? Not that I can see. And whether it could have been better arranged or not, it is useless to speculate either on milk spilt or milk from a cow we have not got and shall not have. "Things are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be." We are here in order that we may become pieces of work "noble in reason, infinite in faculties, in form and moving

express and admirable, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god." Yet not to be so in a uniform pattern, but variously so. And not to fear exhaustion of the various possibilities, as John Stuart Mill once feared that the exhaustion of possible musical combinations would leave him nothing to desire. The idea of infinity demands eternal evolution for the soul that contains it. And it demands personal evolution too. For we need persons to form the very notion of impersonality. History records the struggles for excellence of character, and failures and successes are memorials of aspiration. But there are no hopeless reprobates in God's family. His election is universal, and in the fulness of time we all rejoice therein, though how soon or how late we ourselves have to choose. Doomed to be so saved as we are, and already saved in the Everlasting Now of the Divine Mind, the accomplishment of our doom is of an uncertain date. But in this world and in every world, with men on earth or in heaven or in hell, the ideal end set before us is the attainment of perfect excellence of character, and the Supreme Moral Law is obedience to the will of God. As the Father commands us, so we ought to do.

> "From the gift looking to the Giver,
> And from the cistern to the river,
> And from the finite to infinity,
> And from man's dust to God's divinity."

IV.

Man the Offspring of God.

By HENRY W. CROSSKEY, F.G.S.

What is the meaning of the affirmation that "man is the offspring of God"? Let me state as clearly as I can the proposition asserted.

It is not denied that the men and women now upon earth are the inheritors of physical weaknesses and of passionate tendencies to sin. We are the heirs of all the ages, in a very strict and literal sense. Whatever iniquities have been committed in the past, influence with more or less strength the character of the world's life to-day.

The assertion that "man is the offspring of God" means that man possesses a nature *similar in kind* to that of the awful and mysterious Power from whom his being proceeds, and by whom the heavens and earth were fashioned. The personal qualities of a wise, just, and noble-hearted man are kindred in character to the attributes of his Creator. The most perfect man is the clearest image of the invisible God on which mortal eyes can gaze. Through the exercise of our powers of thought, we may comprehend

the very truth of God. The goodness to be found among men reveals His righteousness. The judgments of God may be interpreted by the methods in which honourable and high-minded men deal with victims of mortal passions. His love may be known from those affections which set us together in families, fill the heart with tender pity for the sorrowful and suffering, and prevent the innocent and pure from having any peace while those who have wandered from the path of duty remain in their degradation. "If (writes J. S. Mill*) I call any being good or wise, not meaning the only qualities which the words import, I am speaking insincerely; I am flattering him by epithets which I fancy that he likes to hear, in the hope of winning him over to my own objects. Does the Divine goodness agree with what men call goodness, in the essence of the quality, in what constitutes goodness? If it does, it is not illicit to reason from one to the other; if it does not, the Divine attribute, whatever else it may be, is not goodness, and ought not to be called by that name."

The doctrine that "man is the offspring of God" implies the identity of the Divine goodness with that which is recognized by man as "goodness" when his nature is educated to its highest point. If this be true—if we can look up to God, and in this deep and sublime sense call Him "our Father"—there is no hope too glorious to be cherished touching our own personal destiny and the future history of our race. Whatever proclivities to evil we may inherit, the life that can claim kindredship with an infinite God must have power to govern passions op-

* "Review of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy," chap. vii.

posed to His will. The possibilities of righteousness must be greater than the possibilities of wickedness.

The connection traced by science between man and the great series of forms of animal life by which he has been preceded, does not disprove, to say the least, his sonship of God. Let it be granted that the life history of the world is the result of a series of continuous and connected processes, and that no part of man's framework, not a muscle, not a joint, not an organ, not a limb, can be dissociated from the vast system to which he belongs. Whatever forms of development may be established, indicate *the method which has been pursued* in the introduction of more and more complex forms of life gradually into the world; they do not touch the deeper question of the personal relationship of man to that Power who *through this method* works out His mighty purposes.

If we could trace back to their origin the physical characteristics of man's structure, we might find them intimately connected with the "*survival of the fittest*" in the struggle for existence. But supposing this investigation successfully accomplished, we should simply have observed a method of creation. "*Struggle for existence*" is not a God, having an independent authority, and commanding *this* creature to arise here and *that* creature to arise there. It is only a phrase more or less adequately describing the mode by which a certain result has been attained.

Functional adaptations to external conditions undoubtedly take place; as, for example, the wings of beetles become rudimentary in the Island of Madeira, where their

use is dangerous, the winds carrying flying insects to the sea. We cannot separate our own organs from the history of such changes. But "*functional adaptation to external changes*" is not a God, any more than the "*survival of the fittest.*" It is a convenient expression, gathering together a series of observed facts. It tells us that biological laws have been in operation for the production of our framework, but it gives no information as to whether the life we actually enjoy is kindred or otherwise to the life of our Creator. When Mr. Spencer says that inheritance of functionally produced modifications is "the cause" of the acquirement of mental superiority of one race over another, the point at issue seems to be assumed. To state that functionally produced modifications are inherited, is to record a fact; but to add that this is the *cause* of the acquirement of mental superiority, is a purely speculative gloss.

In the life history of the world, an order of succession from lower to higher forms is established as a general principle, although a thousand points of detail are yet unsettled. But an "*order of succession*" is not an authoritative power. The phrase describes, in the same way as the other phrases I have noted, a series of observed phenomena. No evidence exists that the shell-less animals and forests of tangle of a first epoch resolved within themselves that an era of fish and fern forests should succeed; or that the fish and fern forests of a second epoch arranged for the production of the reptiles and pine forests of a third epoch; or that these, in their turn, decided that the line of living creatures should culminate in the appearance

of man. Shell-less animals cannot be said to have *caused* the existence of fish, or fish to have *caused* the existence of reptiles, or reptiles to have *caused* the existence of mammalia, merely because they appeared at an earlier period upon the stage of the world. While the scientific student is seeking the links binding each epoch to the epoch immediately preceding it, he is watching the very exercise of creative activity; and for aught science reveals to the contrary, the end and purpose may have been the introduction of man into the world, as a being capable of holding spiritual communion with a Heavenly Father. It does not follow that because man is the last result of a series of progressive changes, either that these changes were effected by a Force that is unintelligent and unloving; or that the infinitely complicated adjustments involved have resulted from accidental and unpurposed associations; or that there is no relationship of sympathy possible between man and his Maker.

A fear, I know, is widely prevalent lest the establishment by science of a connection between man and the general life history of the world should destroy the spiritual glory of his nature, by finally wiping away all distinctions between processes like those of crystallization and the development of animal life; between the development of vegetables and that of animals; between invertebrate and vertebrate forms; between ordinary muscular action and the action of the molecules of the brain. The detection of a method of creation, however, cannot obliterate the fundamental distinctions found as matters of fact among its varied results. Whatever interdependencies may be

established in the directions indicated, whatever analogies, whatever unvarying associations, the gulf between phenomena ordinarily termed spiritual and all other phenomena whatever, remains unbridged. A movement of the molecules of the brain is not, in any intelligible sense, *the same thing* as an act of thought, or the passion of love, or the high resolve which sends the martyr to the stake.

Those who identify thought, love, and self-sacrifice most closely with the forces ordinarily termed physical, cannot wipe away from the record of human experience the realities those words represent. They enlarge the definition of matter, they do not destroy the attributes of a man.

The argument I am urging may be carried a step further. Let it be admitted, as Mr. Darwin maintains, that the difference in mind between man and the higher animals, great as it is, "is one of degree and not of kind;" and that "the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, &c., of which man boasts, may be found in an incipient, or even sometimes in a well-developed condition in the lower animals,"*—man may still be related to God, as a child to a Father. It is, again, a question of the method of creation, and of method alone. Should the facts and inferences contained in Mr. Darwin's great work be finally substantiated, they will show that *God has chosen to manifest His Spirit by degrees;* nothing more. Man's nature cannot be regarded as less richly endowed because it is discovered that God has bestowed upon the

* "The Descent of Man," 2nd ed., p. 126.

lower animals certain emotions and faculties kindred to our own, although not of the same strength, range, and nobleness. Nothing is taken away from us because of the gifts made to other creatures. If we reverence God as the Creator, we ought to honour all His works, and to expect to find in every plant and every animal—in lichen and zoophyte as in man himself—some sign-mark of His glory.

Neither can our nature be degraded by the fact that God has *gradually* unfolded its highest characteristics. Man remains man, through whatever stages his being may have been perfected. We cannot be less truly the offspring of God because He has proceeded step by step towards our creation. We may still be beings He can love, and from whom He can receive love in return, although our nature may have been perfected by agencies operating through countless ages, and manifesting themselves in every form of life that has preceded us, according to its kind. Mr. Darwin's theory of *the Descent of Man*, should it be established, would show that God has chosen to pour forth His Spirit upon earth, not suddenly and at once, in its perfect fulness, but in degrees of measured increase, from epoch to epoch. It would in no respect interfere with any evidence which may be produced from other sources that man, *as he has been finally constituted*, can rightfully call himself the child of his God.

On these various grounds, therefore, I contend that science cannot prove a negative to the proposition that there is a close and intimate relationship between the life that is in man and the life of the Great Being from whom

all created things have flowed and do flow continually. Appeal may be made to many classes of facts in positive justification of this high faith.

The mind of man appears in a very marvellous manner to enjoy the same kind of intellectual life as that which is manifested in the phenomena of the universe itself. By the independent exercise of his own faculties, man has arrived, and is constantly arriving, at results precisely similar to those which are physically involved in the laws of nature. Let me borrow an illustration to explain my meaning.*

"It is worthy of being noted that the ancient geometers, from a general idea of the importance of forms, had carefully investigated the properties of those figures called Conic Sections, because capable of being produced by sections of the cone, at a time when no very important application could be made of the propositions established by them. When Kepler discovered that the planets moved in elliptic orbits, the properties of the ellipse, unfolded so many centuries before by Apollonius and others, were ready to be applied to the solution of a host of important questions connected with the movements of the celestial bodies."

The mind of man, that is, acting in its own strength and according to its own methods, solved the very problems which guided the Creator, ages before the existence of any human being upon earth, in setting the stars in their order. There is an evident kindredship therefore—

* Vide "Typical Forms and Special Ends in Creation," by Dr. J. McCosh and Dr. G. Dickie.

a kindredship of a special and peculiar character—between the Intellect which determined the orbits of the stars and the intellect which worked out independently the mathematical conditions on which those orbits depend.

The discovery of the planet Neptune illustrates the same principle. Apparent irregularities were noticed in the movements of Uranus. By purely mathematical reasoning, Adams and Leverrier almost simultaneously determined that there must be another planet, and pointed out the precise spot at which it might be expected to appear. To that spot the telescope was turned, and there the new planet was found. Through the action of his own mind, man knew how, under specified conditions, the system of the universe must have been completed. As man thought, so it was. Where he decided that a star ought to be, there its light shone.

The old Greek maxim that God works by geometry, expresses the fact that man is capable of thinking out the conditions on which the order of nature depends; and this would be impossible had he not a mind which, however limited in its range, possesses the same essential characters as the mind of the Creator Himself.

Certain forms of architecture give delight to man as noble and beautiful. Obeying the inspiration of his own soul, he has adorned his buildings with ornament he feels to be lovely. There are records entombed within the rocks which show that the Maker of the world rejoices in the same forms and ornaments as those which man, following his own taste, has lovingly fashioned. That which is visible in nature has of course educated man's sense of

beauty; but artists, guided by their own genius, have produced works characterized by a beauty precisely similar to that of fossils long subsequently disentombed from the rocks. It has been pointed out that there is hardly a characteristic of Greek or Gothic architecture that may not be found represented in the columnar trunks of trees that have ceased to grow on earth, and in the twining of the spires and the sculpturing of mollusca long extinct.* But the architects themselves had no knowledge of these facts. The builder of the Corinthian temple was not aware that he had been anticipated by the Creator of the Ulodendron.

The carver who spent his graceful skill on the adornment of Westminster Abbey was altogether unconscious that the sculptured trunks of tree ferns hidden among coal-beds far beneath the soil, had a loveliness akin to that which his own genius brought into the sight of men.

When we find that the shells of creatures inhabiting seas whose waves have ceased to roll, and the plants growing in forests that have perished in building up the land on which we dwell, exhibit in their proportions and designs the same principles as those which give Art its glory, and that this has been done in a myriad cases which never came under the observation of mortal artist until these later days, we are bound to conclude that in the sense of what is beautiful the Creator has made man after His own image.

The argument may be carried yet another step: in his moral nature man may rightly claim to be the child of

* "The Testimony of the Rocks," by Hugh Miller.

God through the identity of the decisions at which he arrives by the use of his own faculties, with the principles which are actually acted upon in the government of the world. The moral laws under which man is compelled to live, which he did not enact and cannot alter, are in harmony with the dictates of his own moral nature.

By the physical constitution of our bodies, intemperance and unchastity are fearfully condemned. They sow the seeds of diseases, poisoning the life-blood of generations, and bringing forth idiotcy and death. These same vices also stand condemned by the inward voice of the soul. It may be urged that this would not be the case unless the accumulated experiences of mankind had proved the indulgence of appetite to be invariably followed by unhappy and unhealthful consequences.

For the sake of argument, let this be admitted. It nevertheless remains true that we possess a nature capable of being so cultivated as ultimately, through an inward sense of right, to give a verdict of its own, in harmony with the outward results of actions extending through centuries. A question of the method of creation once again presents itself. By whatever processes man's nature may have been developed, *as their result* he has actually gained a moral sense pronouncing decisions upon questions of right and wrong in accord with the principles upon which the moral government of the world at large is conducted. There is a supreme righteousness that, entirely apart from any consideration of man's assent or dissent, inflicts penalties and crowns with blessings. Whether continuous observation of *the natural results of*

actions sufficiently accounts for the genesis of conscience or not, *man has a conscience* which compels him to feel disobedience to this Power which stands outside of him and acts in absolute independence of any law enacted by his authority, as shameful sin. The righteousness, that is, which man recognizes through his moral nature, is the same kind of righteousness as that which judges every deed done upon earth. The actual result of the method adopted for the development of our race has been, that as nations advance in civilization the self-same deeds are judged to be noble or ignoble: in the north, south, east and west, one law of right is being accepted as the law of life, and step by step one righteousness is being enthroned as authoritative within the soul of every individual man.

The capacity, and frequently the willingness, of human beings to undertake the most arduous toils and endure the most terrible sufferings for the sake of some passion, some principle, some purpose, some faith, still further reveals our sonship of God. Our nature is so far from being satisfied by obtaining due and ample provision for physical wants and personal pleasures, that to obtain knowledge of the most abstract kind no sacrifice will be withheld.

We want to know the truth. Why? There is no answer except that we are compelled to search for it by an inward necessity of our being. To watch the stars in their courses will bring no grist to the mill; yet we cannot endure to be ignorant of the path of a shower of meteors. We cannot content ourselves with tilling our fields and gathering in their crops; we must examine the beds of primeval

seas, and map the places of vanished continents. It is not enough to be familiar with the nature and habits of the creatures who inhabit the world with us; we must disentomb the remains of a myriad vanished races; and our minds refuse to be comforted so long as we find a bone or a shell that we cannot name and classify. The development of the tiniest germ the microscope can detect, raises problems we cannot permit to remain unsolved. The states and kingdoms to which we belong are not enough for our ambition; we must explore the caves in which our remotest ancestors cracked the bones of the hyena for their marrow.

None toil for money as men will slave to gain a knowledge of circumstances and phenomena of which they make no *use* whatever. They obtain it, and are content. They will give up all chance of getting on in the world; they will run the risk of fever in pestilential swamps; they will dare the arctic winter; they will refuse to leave a microscope day or night; they will make a laboratory their home and value it beyond a palace; they will weigh and measure, dig and bore, ceaselessly, to verify some fact or establish some law in which they neither have or can have any conceivable concern beyond its simple truth.

The activity of man's mind is co-extensive with creation. It would not be necessary to create a new being to pursue truth through eternity. Our intellectual powers are ample for an everlasting life. The student at the end of his days is only beginning to know *how to learn*. Deliver him from the weakness of the flesh and place him in a new world, in the light of his earthly experience he will be prepared

to commence a new career. He will not commit the old mistakes; he will start again as a youth, with the wisdom of a man. Imagine Faraday, with all his experimental skill, beginning fresh investigations in Jupiter or Mars: what a rich, full, glorious life would be his!

Taking man's faculties as they are, no ground exists for believing that at any imaginable period it could be said, "It is impossible that any further knowledge should be gained by their aid." Should we after death be removed to some distant star, we should be perfectly able to study its phenomena, and without doubt should at once with energy and determination address ourselves to the task. Our kindredship with our Maker becomes an intelligible faith when we see that it is impossible to live within the limits of our physical wants; that we are compelled by the very constitution of our minds to become searchers after truth under its most abstract forms; and that during our days on earth we do not necessarily exhaust our faculties, but may gain an intellectual training which will enable us to do better work elsewhere.

I have already spoken of the law of our being by which we arrange and judge actions according to their *qualities*, pronouncing some worthful, others shameful. A metaphysical analysis of "conscience" it may be difficult to make, and the history of its origin may be a complicated problem; but as men and women, by virtue of our manhood and womanhood, we *do* distinguish between what is good and what is evil. In obedience to this sense of Right, what agonies have been endured—*endured*, nay, gloried in! Thousands upon thousands have refused to

live in prosperity and peace because some falsehood has been told, or some idol set up for worship. Why should this be so? Why should any one choose to suffer and die for some abstract notion of what is right? When the threat has been uttered, "Pour a libation to the idol or be thrown to the wild beasts," why has the reply come, "Throw me to the lions; I will pay no honour to the idol"? The idol is nothing. It is merely wood or stone, silver or gold. It cannot hear; it cannot see; it cannot lift up its hand. What could be the harm of pouring out a little wine before it? The old answer of the prophet has been given by brave men from age to age: *Would there not be a lie in my right hand?*

Why should such an answer be accepted as sufficient? Why should there be any martyrs? Why should any one care to awaken the revengeful passions of a thousand foes? If men choose to think that their God visits their altars, and values their sacrifices, their strange fancies, their unreasoning absurdities, and their subtile dogmas, why not let them alone? How is it that although in every age prophets are crowned with thorns, their great race never dies out? It has been proved utterly impossible to eradicate a religious faith by violence. When it was attempted to extinguish Christianity by the sword, the bishops of the Church were obliged to issue decrees cautioning believers against unnecessarily seeking martyrdom. A new vice grew up—the vice of over-anxiety to suffer torture and death for the sake of Christ! The food of such rational people as may live on earth is as pleasant to their taste, the sky is as tenderly blue to their eyes, the flowers of

their gardens are as sweet, their homes are as pleasant, whatever fantastic ceremonies a superstitious crowd may perform before the altars of their gods. Why not let sleeping dogs lie? Why rouse them until they gnash their teeth and spring upon their disturbers? Again, I ask, why should there be any martyrs? *Because we are what we are; because man is man.* Come what come may, come imprisonment, exile, torture, death, because the soul is the soul, no peace can be made with falsehood, and that which is a mere idol cannot be called a God. In those supreme moments when some great moral choice presents itself, *we know*, as we know that we are living souls, by direct and immediate consciousness, that to graze upon rich pasture lands and drink from refreshing waters does not achieve the full purpose of our existence. In such seasons of emergency it stands as clear as the fact of life itself, that our destiny is not fulfilled by pleasantly consulting our ease and comfort—that we are not *true to ourselves* when content with that.

When Sir Thomas More* was flung into the Tower for refusing to take an oath contrary to his conscience, illustrious visitors came to him and pleaded with him to yield obedience to an authority outside his own sense of duty. After Cranmer had argued that it was more certain that he ought to obey the King and the law than that his own opinion was correct; and the Abbot of Westminster had urged that he ought to change his conscience, since the great Council of the realm was of another mind; and his wife had told him of her wonder that he should so play

* Vide Roper's "Life of Sir T. More."

the fool as to be shut up in a filthy dungeon with rats and mice, when he had a good house, a library, and a garden, and could live pleasantly with her and her children, and enjoy the King's favour; the Solicitor-General visited the imprisoned statesman and desired to put a case. The case of the Solicitor-General was this: whether, if an Act of Parliament were to make him (Mr. Rich) King, Sir Thomas More would not own him to be so? Yes, was the reply. The Solicitor-General triumphantly continued his questioning, and asked whether, if an Act of Parliament should create him Pope, Sir Thomas would not acknowledge him? The reply of Sir Thomas More the world will not willingly let die. Parliament (he said) might intermeddle without any impropriety with the state of temporal princes; but to meet Mr. Rich's second case he would put another question himself;—whether, if any Act of Parliament should pass *ordaining that God should not be God, Mr. Rich should own that He should not?* The Rock of Ages is reached at last. In his own conscience, man stands face to face with his God, and cannot deny Him. When the soul is sounded to its uttermost depths, it is found that God is there, and that for man to be false to himself is to be false to his God.

The divine origin of man is further evident when we mark the heights of peace and gentle-hearted nobleness to which those are uplifted who "endure unto the end" for righteousness' sake. In the hour of Christ's bitterest and most terrible agony, his heart was full of the most gracious love. When he was actually upon the cross, when the nails had been cruelly driven through his flesh, when the

blood was freshly streaming from his wounds, he uttered that most sublimely tender of all prayers, "Father! forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

When certain of the synagogue suborned witnesses to accuse Stephen of blasphemy, it is written that "all that sat in the council looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been as the face of an angel." This is the effect of a false accusation; it uplifts the accused into a higher region of faith and hope and love; it reveals to his own heart the glorious blessedness of its own life. A cruel falsehood brings divinest peace to the soul against which it is hurled; the very wickedness of the charge compels the heart to rejoice in the Holy Spirit within it. Great souls are compensated for mighty wrongs by a peace that passeth understanding.

If we would know how magnificently the soul can believe in a God, how nobly it can put an absolute faith in His mercy, how tenderly it can love, we must learn of some martyr in his hour of agony. The death of Stephen is typical of a thousand other deaths as marvellously glorious. As the merciless stones are flung at him, and his body is crushed beneath their painful blows, he very sweetly, very calmly, very trustfully commits his spirit to his God, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" asks pardon for his murderers, crying, "Lord! lay not this sin to their charge," and "falls asleep." "Falls asleep!"—as a child, at peace with himself, at peace with the world, at peace with his Maker.

If man be not the child of God, what is he? If his soul have no kindredship with the righteousness from age

to age asserting itself through all this world's affairs, he could not be so consciously and courageously faithful to its commands, and, in direct proportion to his faithfulness, gain strength and peace in the direst extremities of fleshly torment.

We are created, moreover, capable of enduring another class of sufferings even more terrible than those of the self-devoted martyr. I refer to those sufferings which are not caused by the deliberate choice of a road certain to lead to the Cross, but are inflicted by God apart from the will of those who have to endure them, and without offering any possibility of escape. It is one thing for a prophet to fight a brave battle with falsehood and wrong; in the strife itself there is inspiration—in the strenuousness of contest, a charm: it is another thing to grow in godliness through long years of inevitable agony. To be confined to a bed of sickness, as many men and women have been, and yet with the increase of pain to gain a more cheerful, trustful love and a brighter faith in a Heavenly Father, is a sign of childhood to God equal to that revealed by any martyr who has been bound to the stake.

In many a noble instance, the decay of the flesh is accompanied by the deeper, fuller, richer life of the spirit, and nurtures within it blossoms of rare beauty: the loss of the simplest pleasures, common to all the world, brings the gain of a blessedness such as only the noblest feel; the necessity of receiving service without stint wonderfully destroys all selfishness; the denial of healthful activity renders every "thing of beauty," from the wild flower to the poet's song, a deeper joy; the settled and final im-

possibility of doing anything but watch and wait for death, establishes the happy faith that all things are working together for good!

If man be the mere perishable creature of a day, how is it that he has a spirit within him mightier than the elements of corruption and decay? If the glorious unfolding of the loveliness and strength and sanctity of the soul "under great tribulation" does not justify the loftiest hopes for time and for eternity, how can it be explained, and what does it mean?

Another line of thought lends support to our faith that we are God's children. Whatever love is within man's heart must be taken in evidence of his Creator's relationship to him. The affections, equally with the faculties, responsibilities and unconquerable hopes of our souls, must contain a revelation of the Power who placed us upon earth. We belong to this great universe. We are neither interlopers nor intruders. We are bound to all the elements, and all the elements are bound to us. We weigh the worlds and predict their courses. We time the tides and measure the speed of the sun's rays. That our faculties are reliable is proved by experience and experiment. Following just methods of research, our minds ascertain truths which are capable of verification. Whenever a scientific discovery is made, not only is admission to a new intellectual kingdom won, but fresh evidence is offered that our power of thought can be trusted, and that our minds are not necessarily the victims of strong delusions and of lies.

Since our faculties are proved to be trustworthy by the

discoveries they accomplish, the inexhaustible affections that move within us, which are part of us, which cannot be torn away from us without our ceasing to be men and women, cannot be dismissed as giving us no message concerning our relationship to our Creator.

Prof. Jevons, in his work on the Principles of Science, writes: "Our own hopes and wishes and determinations are the most undoubted phenomena within the sphere of consciousness. If men *do* act, feel and live as if they were not merely the brief products of a casual conjunction of atoms, but the instruments of a far-reaching purpose, are we to record all other phenomena and pass over this? We investigate the instincts of the ant and beaver, and discover that they are led by an inscrutable agency to work towards a distant purpose. Let us be faithful to our scientific method, and investigate also those instincts of the human mind by which man is led to work as if the approval of a higher Being were the aim of life."*

Man is as much a being capable of affection as of thought and duty; and whatsoever strong and noble tenderness there is in human love is a reliable foundation for the faith that *we are loved* by the Power from whom our breathing spirits came—*unless, indeed, man is greater than his Maker.* I claim, however, the dismissal of such a suspicion as incredible. Dare we stand in the light of day, and call before us the great line of martyrs and prophets, and remember the sanctity of Christ, and say that the great Source of all that is loving and holy in life is less richly endowed than some mother watching over

* Vide "Principles of Science," 1st ed., II. pp. 469, 470.

her child, some friend stretching out his helping hand to a friend, some kindly nurse soothing the pains of a sick bed, some good man toiling to save others from ignorance and crime? Because I dare not say that man himself is the supreme Being of beings, King of kings, Lord of lords, I acknowledge a Love greater than all the love that has ever poured itself upon earth, in the awful and mysterious Creator of our race.

No method of awakening tenderness can be imagined more complete than that which places us on earth as babies in arms. The necessities of children are direct appeals to the human heart. In the absoluteness of its dependence upon others, the baby is lord and master, king and emperor. It is waited upon with that willingness of service which weakness best wins. We are so constituted that love deepens as it is called upon to serve. Love is intensified, not out-wearied, by constant demands upon its watchfulness.

The world is so governed that the sanctities of home life are the foundations of social order as of personal happiness. Everything connected with the prosperity of our race is so upbound with human love, that whenever there is general neglect of the purity of love, whenever the innocence of home life is violated, empires reel to their destruction as though shaken by an earthquake's tread.

So perfectly are we the offspring of a Power that loves us, that the guiding rule of duty is the guiding rule of love. When any doubt arises as to what course of conduct it is right to follow, one directing law has never yet failed—let us do to others as we would have them do unto us. Let

us imagine ourselves suffering what we are inclined to inflict, and our lips will be dumb when they should be dumb, and our hands still when they should be still. Let us ask how we can do good to others, and we shall have the least possible difficulty in the right conduct of our own lives. The law of Righteousness is not hard, abstract, cold, bitter; it is the very law which binds heart to heart. Surely we must be loved beyond measure by the God who made us, when the ordainments of His sovereign Righteousness are hidden in the depths of our own mortal love! Not only is the path of duty found by taking our brethren into the counsel of our hearts, but love and duty are so blended that the very life of the one is the life of the other. Lust and murder are near to each other—strangely, madly, terribly near. Let any lie be told, or injustice committed, or purity violated, "all for love" as it may be pleaded, love itself takes flight.

When the massacre of the Huguenots was at hand, the word was passed to faithful Catholics that they were to wear a sign upon their sleeves to distinguish them from the doomed and hated heretics. In a famous picture, a lady, young and beautiful, is represented as striving to fix upon her lover's arm the band which will save him in the impending massacre. If that bold, handsome youth will but yield to her pleading, if he will merely wear a lie upon his sleeve, all will be well; he will be spared, and gain alike his life and his love. But the infinitely tender expression of blended strength and sorrow on his countenance, as he gently moves away the badge, shows that he esteems death preferable to an act of shame. What would

have happened had that youth consented to wear the sign-mark of a faith he denied? What has happened in many a kindred case? Marriage and happiness? Not so; marriage and misery! The haunting restlessness of personal dishonour would never have left his heart, and its shadow would have fallen upon the soul of his bride. So wonderfully are we created as God's children, that righteousness and peace kiss each other within our souls.

The effect of human ignorance, misery and sin upon the happiest, wisest and noblest of men, is another ground for believing that we are bound together as a family, and are under the care of One we may rightly call "our Father." Instructors of the ignorant, helpers of the miserable, friends of the sinful, are constantly entering the world. It is as certain as that day will follow night, that, whatever falsehoods be believed on earth, brave thinkers will arise and speak truth upon the house-tops. The lame, the sick, the deaf, the blind, because of their infirmities, win friends. The sinful and degraded assert claims to which no resistance can be made. Instead of the pure in heart being disposed to stand aside from the guilty, to wrap themselves closely in the proud mantle of their own sanctity, they are, as Christ was, the friends "of publicans and sinners."

The poor outcast woman has no friend among her associates as pitiful as her unstained sister. The street rough has no comrade among the coarse band of drunken idlers he mingles with, who cares for him like the missionary who would win him to church and school. The prophet, revolted by the iniquities of his people, prayed

that he might escape from them: "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them!"

"Woe's me!" the peaceful prophet cried,
"Spare me this troubled life
To stem man's wrath, to school his pride,
To head the sacred strife.

"O place me in some silent vale
Where groves and flowers abound,
Nor eyes that grudge, nor tongues that rail,
Vex the truth-haunted ground."

But he cannot forsake his nation; he *must* speak the word of his God. The prophets of God cannot help themselves. They are moved by a Power beyond their own, resistless and supreme. The Lord who made man, through them as His instruments, eternally wars against human misery and sin. There is but one explanation of these facts—we are cared for as children who cannot be permitted to perish.

How are we delivered from our sins? Let us turn to the great Deliverer and see how he did his work. Christ redeemed man by appealing to the God-like spirit within him. Around Jesus Christ real sinners gathered—not theological sinners—not comfortable sinners, confessing their iniquities as a matter of pious routine—but men and women tempted to the uttermost and betrayed by mortal passion. Let us not be deceived by the halo thrown by history around distant scenes. Actual thieves, loose people without any respectability, commonplace prodigals, abandoned women, those outside the pale of all good society, flocked around Christ.

I once heard a sermon in which the preacher attempted to show that the thief to whom Christ said, "This night thou shalt sup with me in Paradise," could not have been an ordinary thief. He argued that so disreputable a character as a mere thief would not have been a fit companion for Christ in Paradise. The offence, he thought, must have been political rather than criminal. The preacher shrank from believing that Christ went to Paradise in bad company. What a caricature of the Gospel! Christ really and truly came into contact with the sinful. How did he treat them? He appealed to them as children of God, who might arise and escape from their iniquities. He spake of the desire of God that the lost should be found, the wandering sheep be brought back to the pasture, the prodigal return to his home. But Christ did not lower one demand of God's righteousness to suit (as it might have been pleaded) the weak and wayward nature of man. This Teacher, who addressed himself to the worst of men—who avowed that he had come, not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance—bade them "be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." The wonderful result was, that they did not shrink from Christ as from one who was asking too much from them—who was calling them to an impossible task—who was lifting up a standard they could never hope to attain. Instead of being driven to despair by Christ's demand for an unsullied sanctity, they felt the stirrings of a new life full of hopefulness and joy. A divine love for the Master's holiness was quickened within them, and consumed as in a

flaming fire all ignoble tastes, desires, and appetites. Addressed as children of God, children of God they knew themselves to be.

This great miracle of redemption is repeated in every generation. How often, when we are troubled by a wrongful appetite, passionate temper, or selfish desire, do we tremble lest we should never escape from it! It comes upon us so unexpectedly, and we forget ourselves (as the phrase runs) so readily. We cannot keep it away from our thoughts even when we most detest it. It is an enemy which lurks in secret hiding-places of the soul, and is ever stealing into the brain and into the heart. But, thank God! the experience of thousands proves that a way of deliverance is provided. The lives of the greatest and best of men make us think nobly of our own souls. They waken sympathies and affections and aspirations in harmony with their own. The life of Christ—the saintliest of God's sons—fills us with the supreme conviction that we are also the Lord's children. By the love of Christ, the burden of our transgressions is uplifted. That which we wrongfully cherished, we cherish no more; the temper once so readily indulged, knows its master; the sin once found so pleasant, becomes hateful.

I know no grander sign of our childhood to God than this divine fact, that the most perfect holiness of which it can enter into the heart of man to conceive—such holiness as "became flesh" in Jesus Christ—can awaken absorbing and devoted love even within the most degraded, and that by this love the soul, desiring no more the things that are

base, is cleansed from the stains of its guilt. To use the words of Paul, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

Let no one imagine that too strong a conviction of the dignity of life will bring in its train too feeble a sense of the horror of sin. Sin becomes more terrible in proportion to the depth of our faith that we are God's children. When we know what we might have been—how pure and just, how loving and true, how unselfish and brave—the shame of being *what we are* is the more bitter. What is the first cry of bitter grief on the loss of a dear friend but this: "O God, that I had better proved my love!" As we feel the reality of our Heavenly Father's claims upon us, we are warned to take care betimes, lest when we are passing into the silent land the cry of the same anguish should be forced from our lips. Those who have the highest sense of the sacredness of life feel its degradation the most keenly. Those who cherish the loftiest ideal of character, sorrow the most sadly over their own shortcomings. Paul was in sober and solemn earnest when he cried, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief." The glory of the Christ whose stainless spirit might have been his, shone so brightly upon him, that the slightest imperfection of which he was conscious became dark and black as a deadly sin.

"When I was a monk" (said Luther), "I frequently corresponded with Dr. Staupitz. Once I wrote to him, 'Oh my sins! my sins! my sins!' Whereto he replied,

'You would fain be without sin; you have no right sin, such as murdering of parents, blaspheming, adultery, and the like. Thou hadst better keep a register of right and true sins, that so thou mayst not afflict thyself about small matters.'" Luther, like Paul, struggled towards so noble a height of nobleness that none of his actions were of "small" account; and although he had committed no "right sins," he could only cry, "Oh my sins! my sins! my sins!" Spiritual experiences such as these prove that to convince men of their childhood to God will not cherish an ecstatic and sentimental boastfulness, but render iniquity more iniquitous to their souls.

At the same time, their hearts will be gladdened with the assurance that there is nothing too perfect in righteousness for the sober expectation of the people of God.

The wanderer among woods and mountains learns that there is nothing the mind can imagine too lovely or too grand to be met with as a reality of this common earth. Paint before the mind's eye any scene of which it can conceive; fling in crag and torrent; rive asunder giant heights; scatter huge fragments of rifted granite in unapproachable confusion; plant the mountain-ash here and there in the midst of the desolation, that the crimson berries hanging from its boughs may make the barrenness more barren;—earth can show some scene that will better the mind-painted picture.

The student of science after years of study is compelled to say, "There is no explanation of natural phenomena too wonderful to be credible; there is no law too marvel-

lous to be discovered in operation; I can invent no order of nature more majestic than that which actually prevails."

The believer in the childhood of man to God has the firmest of all possible grounds for the conviction that there is no kingdom of heaven too glorious to be established in time and in eternity by the strength of the Lord's right hand and in the faithful tenderness of His love.

V.

Salvation.

By ALEXANDER GORDON, M.A.

Rom. v. 15: "The gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

The first question we ask about any movement is, What does it propose to do? the next, How is this to be done? and then, What is the result in actual working? The answers bring before us the aims, the resources, the achievements of the undertaking.

I.

Applying to the Christian religion these interrogations, we get a reply to the first in a single word, Salvation.

Christianity undertakes to save the souls of men. What this means, we shall presently consider. It expresses the distinctive office which the religion of Jesus proposes as its primary, its substantial concern. For Christianity professes to be something more than a speculative or a didactic system. Didactic it is, and in a certain sense dogmatic. It is dogmatic, for example, on the Being of

God; it is dogmatic also on the punishment of sin. But it touches on points of theology and of ethics with an aim which is essentially practical. So far as it conveys instruction, it has an object in thus doing which is not the mere advancement of human knowledge for its own sake. While it exercises the right of announcing a newer discovery of truth, in matters which transcend the unassisted efforts of the human intellect; while it challenges the merit of laying down a purer code of moral principles for the guidance of human affairs; it subordinates these affirmations to a deeper, a more important claim. It asserts a pre-eminent power of conferring a vital good upon the human soul, and this vital good it terms salvation. To comprehend Christianity in its essence, to appreciate the true character of the religion of Jesus, we must know what it means by this promise, we must understand the nature of its salvation.

Salvation is a technical word; and the technical words of theology are not in any high repute at the present day. The practical disposition of our age is impatient of them; the scientific mind of our time considers that it has outgrown them. This ancient word stands for a living idea which has passed through a remarkable history. Without parting with its fundamental force, still the key to its present value, it has gained both in depth and in expansiveness; so that its full significance is but imperfectly brought out by the study of its original application.

Salvation, in its first intent, broadly stood for liberation from servitude, and all that this implies. The "saviours" of the Hebrew nation were the instruments of

a national deliverance which, by removing foreign oppression or native misrule, gave scope to the devout patriotism of Israel, enabling the nation's best life to take its true place and assert its real power. Nor was their work an external one. They carried out their mission by operating in the first instance upon the spirit of the people, rousing in their hearts whatever was most noble and sincere, and making the development of the national conscience precede and originate the attainment of the national liberties. The history of Israel is thus a spiritual history, and prepares for the great work of Christianity, the emancipation of the soul. As the nation's original foes were its own weakness, its own vices, its own sloth and selfishness, its own irreligion; as these were the evil masters and inward oppressors, from whose thraldom the nation must first be vindicated, or no real and permanent deliverance could be effected for it; so, when the problem of redemption was transferred from the sphere of the national life to that of the individual soul, its solution was of a similar kind.

Death, Hell, the Devil, frown upon the soul, as Egypt or Assyria menaced Israel. These are not the real foes To put away the fear of them will not touch the root of the matter. Decree the annihilation of Hell, so that it pass away in the night like Sennacherib's army; what thereby have you done to save a single soul? Every sinner carries a tyrant within his breast; and if you would rescue the slave of sin, a personal regeneration is the only way. The servitude to be relieved is that of lust, pride, deceit, injustice, hypocrisy, the evil heart, the unloving

and unlovely life; the boon to be desired is the spirit to love the right, the energy to will and do the right. No remedy that comes short of this vital process can ever be the soul's salvation. Aid but the soul to reach the spiritual independence of this strength divine, and, while it endures and is active, Death, Hell, the Devil, can neither fright nor harm. Banish in any other wise the wholesome dread which sin inspires, and what do you really accomplish? The soul is not saved. It is but inflated with a vain confidence, which leaves its actual inward state unchanged for the better. Surface expedients cannot remove the mischief deeply seated, which still pursues its damning course within. Goats are not sheep, though you sprinkle them in imagination with the blood of Christ, and pretend to marshal them at the right hand of God. Too often is it true, that much of what passes for religious experience serves but to stifle the just apprehensions of the soul, effects no radical improvement, ensures no vital reform. Hence the vulgar scorn, an honest protest in its way, which despises all religion as a futile luxury of the emotional nature. For, as was remarked by a devout man, speaking of some who esteemed themselves "saints and the redeemed ones," in the mid-ferment of the Puritan revolution: "What shift God may make with them in heaven, I know not (He can do much); but if I may speak unfeignedly, they are so unmortified and untrue of word and deed, that they are found untoward members for a true commonwealth and civil society here on earth."

The core of the Christian purpose, then, is to accomplish in the soul of man a real spiritual work, reformatory

and regenerative in its nature, and this work is what we mean by salvation.

The historical development of the idea of salvation has been assisted by the force of the particular term through which that idea has been defined in our theology. The late Latin word salvation, which has obtained currency as the one recognized equivalent of two independent and not altogether synonymous expressions, one belonging to the Old Testament, the other to the New, brings to the question before us a special contribution of its own. Not only does it prominently set forth, but it lays an added emphasis upon the New Testament view as distinguished from the Old Testament view. "Salvation," like "Atonement," is one of those admirable coinages of the Christian mint, which have enriched, so to speak, the vocabulary of Revelation, in its passage into the forms of modern speech. It is not a classical but a Christian term. ["Cicero *soterem* salvatorem noluit nominare." *Capella.*] Its root is connected with the ideas of health and soundness, as well as those of prosperity and security. Indicating somewhat less casual than a rescue and a restoration, it suggests the even and vigorous action of the soul's powers, the maturity of the spiritual nature. Thus we advance beyond the crude theory of salvation which views it as a measure of repair, calculated to produce certain beneficent effects. We find it necessary to study the Christian ideal of life in its positive and inherent character, before we can define what salvation really is. It is to the inner man what health is to the outer man.

Sinfulness is no mere servitude. It is the impairing of

the soul's freshness and beauty of faculty, the disordering of the spiritual economy, till, by degrees, "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint." The man has lost the moral independence of self-control and is a slave; he needs release, and from the web woven by himself. But he has also lost tone, and right vision, and power of correct judgment; his faculties, however fine otherwise, are vitiated; he is a sick man; he needs, therefore, moral health as well as moral freedom. The condition in which both these requirements meet is covered by the word salvation, which stands for the Christian idea of sound life and true manhood.

There is indeed another way of representing the effects of sin. Sin is rightly described as an offence against God, the great rebellion against the Divine rule. If we ask, why it is so, and how anything can offend the majesty of God, the answer leads us back to what has just been said. God is not an arbitrary Being. The whole design of His government of our world is the production of an excellence like His own. He looks for that character in man which, in its moral aspect, we term uprightness; which, viewed in connection with its religious springs, is righteousness of godly living; and, in its spiritual elevation, rises into holiness, the saintly experience, the heavenly mind, the Christ life, the character of God communicated to and reflected in the soul of man. Nothing short of this will satisfy the ultimate demands of God. Sin is an offence against Him, because sin mars, distorts, and, so far as its influence extends, destroys the divine likeness in man. The offence of sin cannot be removed without

removing the cause of the offence; and this can only be done by first securing the integrity, and then going on to produce the full spiritual development, of the soul.

Salvation, accordingly, is imperfectly considered if it be viewed in the light of a reputed remedy against certain dangers, the wrath of God, the fire of Hell, the terrors of Death, or the wiles of the Devil. Salvation is a practical, not a speculative matter; a good to be desired and acquired for its own sake, whatever be its issues in a world unseen. It is that state of the soul which implies the unimpaired possession of itself, the just use of its opportunities, the enjoyment of its normal, or, if you will, its ideal vitality. For this is the foundation of the soul's complete reception of the life of God.

II.

The normal man is, it may be said, the impossible man. Aberration is part of the definition of humanity. "Mankind," says a plain speaker, "is a damned rascal;" and the Westminster Catechism couches the same sentiment in language scarcely less guarded. With deeper wisdom, Butler has laid it down that "Men may speak of the degeneracy and corruption of the world according to the experience they have had of it; but human nature, considered as the divine workmanship, should methinks be treated as sacred." The true pattern of humanity, if the Scripture do not lie, is to be sought in God Himself. "A man," says the bold Apostle, "is the image and glory of God." And, by the consent of all Christians, however much they may be divided among themselves in their attempts to furnish a rationale of the fact, one has lived,

and still lives, in whom true manhood, that is, the true likeness of God, has been and is effectively realized. This is he who comes to us as the preacher of spiritual religion, the agent and minister of salvation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ proffers faith in himself as the instrument of salvation. It is not that he requires or exacts this as an arbitrary condition, on a bare command of authority. What he actually does, is to render such faith both possible and natural. He sets within our reach this great boon of faith in our own nature, its divine ground, its illimitable spiritual possibilities, its predestined triumph over itself, till it reach, if not here, yet surely hereafter, the fulness of perpetual peace and joy in the welcoming love of God. Faith in Christ is faith in the Soul, faith in Man; not indeed in man of the earth, earthy; but in the Heavenly Man, the living type and eternal prophecy of man's true life, true greatness, and true glory. As we view it, it is faith in one who, having in himself no other spiritual essence than our own, had experienced, probing to their depths, the very temptations which assault us, yet proved himself morally omnipotent. Even those among Unitarians who question the abstract sinlessness of Jesus, admit in him a completeness of moral conquest which gives us, through him, a new and operative faith in man, in the powers, the duties, the destiny, the divine filiation of the soul.

When, therefore, theologians borrow the mantle of the cynic and the pessimist, when they urge the failures and the sins of men, in witness of the necessary impotence of man to live the life of God, the life of spiritual freedom

and spiritual wholeness, the life which God designed when man was made,—they can justify their words only by excluding from humanity the one man whom they are bound first of all to consider, the one man who has actually fulfilled the required conditions, "the man Christ Jesus." If Christ be man, "of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting," then there is a perfect answer to the doubts of the soul; then there is a relief for its despair; then the thraldom of sin may be, for it is, broken, the sickness of sin may be healed. What man is in Christ, man may thoroughly believe in. Salvation is possible; this day its light hath dawned, its hope is come, its energy already throbs within the heart of faith. I fall, because I am weak; but the stirring endurance of a braver, better soul comforts me, re-inspirits me, assures me; gives me power again to attempt and, this time, to succeed. In every phase of the moral conflict there are some with capacity thus to cheer and to renew me; some, who have passed through the fire unscathed, and, being wholly turned to God, have power to strengthen the brethren. Christ possesses absolutely this power, which others share in less degrees and in special instances; he is the moral regenerator of the human race.

The spiritual wholeness which places Christ in this unique relation to the problem of salvation requires no doubt to be accounted for. It may honestly be accounted for in more ways than one. The full discussion of the question belongs to speculative Christianity rather than to practical Christianity. But here, without wishing to invade the lines of a succeeding lecture, it may be well

to offer an observation tending to remove a difficulty. There are those who lay great stress on the assurance, which they think they find in the New Testament, that the man Jesus Christ is the actual child of God, the only-begotten of the Eternal Light and Love. The archetypal manhood they take to be the direct offspring of the Godhead, and intelligible in no other way. There are others who shrink from this position, lest, in adopting it, they should surrender that very truth with which, to those who hold it, it stands indissolubly connected, as the cause with its effect, the truth, namely, of the pure and perfect manhood of Jesus. The spiritual agreement here is of greater moment than the dogmatic divergence. In the fundamental conviction, which alone is of immediate religious importance, both occupy substantially the same ground. This is true even of those who seem, so far as language goes, to stand most aloof from the idea here presented; those, namely, among us who think the data of Scripture best harmonized by the acceptance of Christ as a super-angelic visitant, translated to earth from the celestial sphere, and who therefore shrink from applying to his inmost nature the name of man, to them a term expressive of spiritual limitation rather than of spiritual possibilities. The great theological principle, amounting almost to a discovery in theology, enunciated by Channing, brings their view into strict accord with the substance of what has been said. "When we speak," wrote Channing, "of higher orders of beings, of angels and archangels, we are apt to conceive of distinct kinds and races of beings, separated from us and from each other by impassable

barriers. But it is not so. All minds are of one family." These last words deserve to be written in golden characters. They form the key to the right apprehension of theological mysteries. In their light all Christians may understand how it is that the spiritual wholeness of Jesus, in other words his true manhood, is the justification of our confidence in him, and the source of his helpfulness to us. Whencesoever derived, whether or not extraneously gifted and glorified, we can all say, 'This now is flesh of our flesh, and soul of our soul;' we all can also say, 'I had lost faith in manhood, I have regained it in Christ.' This is the confidence which turns the will and frees the soul; 'I believe and am saved.' The missing power is missed no more; the vital impulse is received: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The agency of Jesus Christ in salvation is here regarded as an agency, unique at any rate in force and degree, but operating exclusively upon man, not at all operating upon God. It is man who needs to be saved; it is not God who needs to be moved to will human salvation. From the beginning this has been and ever is the will of God. The sinfulness, the rebellion of man, so far from weakening or diverting the mercies and the purpose of the Most High, would rather, if Infinite Love were susceptible of increase, enhance the compassion of the Divine Goodness and Wisdom existing eternally in Him who hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked may turn from his way and live." Well does the saintly Henry Scougal say: "There is no such thing as despite

or envy lodged in the breast of that ever-blessed Being, whose name and nature is Love." The agency of Christ, then, is not to conciliate God, but to restore and regenerate man, to bring the soul to itself, to kindle there the love of righteousness, the resolve to live for God. This is his very life-blood in our souls, which cleanses and inspires.

Perhaps we ask, why, if God thus wills human salvation, He does not take measures to secure it, more immediate and direct. We could suppose a miracle, by which God at once restored the fallen soul, regenerating at a stroke its inward spiritual condition. This could not be objected to on the mere ground that God is a God of order; for such a fiat would simply introduce the lost principle of order, and bid the moral chaos be at an end. But it may be seen on another ground to be morally impossible. God has given to man a possession, precious and perilous, which He will not lightly withdraw. Man has choice of good and evil, of God and self. His will is left free to wander from God and goodness; of his own will must he return to the forsaken centre, or not at all may the homeward way be won. God is not the synonym of brute force. Not of machines or of slaves is the moral universe constituted in which He delights. The very heart must turn, the straying affections be concentrated on God; the insolent will become obedient on conviction, not on compulsion; the life that was depraved must inwardly be renewed; and all this of free choice.

As the condition, then, of forgiveness for the past and of spiritual aid for the future, God asks of His child

repentance. He asks no more. This is the free grace of His goodness, the eternal rule of His dealings with man. The truth cannot be too emphatically, too unreservedly proclaimed; repentance is not merely the indispensable condition, it is the sole condition, of Divine forgiveness. In whatever religion, or unreligion, the soul makes one genuine act of repentance, God accepts this, the only offering He calls for; His mercy freely pardons; His love renews with spiritual accession of divine strength the heart thus surrendered to Him. There may even be no conscious surrender to God, no viewing of repentance in the light of an offering to Him; if but the real thing be there, the old true word cannot miss its fulfilment: "I am found of them that sought me not." Neither as proof of repentance, nor as its concomitant, does God require any conditions of belief. When repentance is tested as to its sincerity and strength, the question is raised, not of the possession of a specific faith, but of the presence of a forgiving spirit. "Forgive," says the divine mandate, "and you shall be forgiven." And why? Because here appeal is laid to a new exercise of the regenerated nature, which constitutes the best evidence of that softening of heart, that change of temper, that willingness to live a truer, better, worthier life, in which repentance really consists.

Those, however, who would press this truth to the exclusion of the work of Christ, need to be reminded how difficult and how rare an act repentance really is. A just view of the nature of repentance is indeed one of the chief wants in the theology of the day. It is not a simple

sorrow; or a mere horror of sin; still less, a dread of its consequences. Repentance is included in none of these emotions; though all, or any of them, may serve as preliminaries to repentance, and operate as incentives to it. Repentance involves an actual determination of the will, an inward and effectual turning away from many cherished tendencies, to embrace God's holy rule of life. The gate is strait, the way is narrow, few enter it. Far astray, from whatever side they speak, are those who characterize pardon upon repentance as pardon upon easy terms. The difficulty of it in many cases approaches to an impossibility. The wish is vehement to be free, the will feels itself hopelessly servile. How am I, being what I am, to become other than I am? How can I break this chain of habit which I myself have forged? How struggle successfully against this native disposition, these inherited tendencies, which persistently drag me down? How may I rise above myself? "O wretched man that I am!" cried he who spoke of man as God's image and glory; "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The question of despair found an answer of hope and triumph: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This answer satisfies, because it introduces into the problem an unsuspected source of power. Christ is a real Saviour, inasmuch as the direct action upon the heart and will of what he is, and what he has done, empowers the soul in its renunciation of sin, its achievement of spiritual freedom. A new hope is awakened; a new life, perhaps unthought of, perhaps despaired of, dawns on the heart; now it is within actual reach. The living Son of God.

outside the soul, calls upon the dead son of God within the soul itself, and calls not in vain. "Thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!" Feeling in Christ a constraining influence exerted on his spiritual being, the sinful man, like the younger son in the parable, comes to himself, and, coming to his true and better self, turns to God.

Hence it is that God sends as the agent of salvation the True Man, with Him existing before all ages (whether in prevenient Idea, or in substantial Entity, matters little to the present discussion), for us born in the latter days, born of His own essential life, to be "a quickening spirit" for the renewal of "living souls." He hath "laid help on one that is mighty." All that makes the personal career of Jesus Christ sacred and venerable, has this supreme object, to reveal the Soul, for man's sake, in its ideal purity and potency, that so the sinful heart, which aforetime, if it believed in God, believed only to tremble and turn away, may henceforth believe in the true and holy soul, and believing may turn to God and live.

For, while the work of Christ does not in any way change God, it does effect a transformation of equivalent importance to us, by rectifying our ideas of God, and of the divine relations to man. Christ enables us to interpret the divine character by the clue of Fatherhood and of Love. This he does, not by setting aside the divine justice, or that wrath which is only its active form, but by inducing the consciousness that all God's actions toward us, whether they make us inly smart or bring us present joy, are the outcome of an unalterable purpose for

our good. The true knowledge of God, the knowledge, namely, of His Fatherly character, is perverted by our sense of wrong-doing. Like Jacob fearing to meet Esau whom he had wronged, we dare not draw nigh unto God. We know that we have made a barrier between ourselves and our Maker, and we ascribe to Him an unwillingness to be reconciled, which is but the shadow, projected upon God, of our own wilfulness and transgression. Christ takes the cloud away, reveals the countenance of the Most High, and lo, after our conflict, struggling against our true peace in the dread night of alienation, a light breaks upon the heart: "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

The Cross itself, most potent instrument of reconciliation, operates solely upon the heart of man, where change is needed; nowise on the heart of God, where Love immutable holds its everlasting seat. Dr. Johnson is the author of the saying that "the only method by which religious truth can be established is by martyrdom." And Jesus Christ affirms: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should be a martyr unto the truth." But the Cross is more, far more, than a martyrdom, an attestation to the truth. Its office is not so much to convince the understanding, as to enlist the feelings and the conscience on the side of the goodness there exhibited in the extremity of self-sacrifice. Thus it justifies the saying of Jesus: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The heart cannot resist the appeal made upon it by the spectacle of Gethsemane and Calvary. The will surrenders itself to the guidance of

him who has "trodden the winepress alone," contending against unrighteousness, battling for the emancipation and the health of the soul. How vile is sin, since sin took nail in hand, and with pitiless iron, not so malignant as the pitiless heart, nailed Jesus to the Cross! How rich is heavenly love, since love of this my soul brought Christ my Lord, the righteous one, to bleed and die for me! Christ establishes by the Cross a claim upon the soul; he has bought us, from our lower selves, with a price, the price of his own divine compassion and unselfish suffering.

Moreover, it may be added that, so far as we can express in human speech our sense of the divine estimate of man, we are entitled to maintain that the life and work of Christ must make a difference here. God loves the sinner as truly and as effectively as He loves the saint; but He views them, so to speak, with different eyes. The sinner He loves, discerning in him, what we cannot see, the possibilities, undestroyed, of a sainthood yet to be reached. Nor can He look at mankind without taking into account the realization of the true glory of manhood in Christ. This is a glory prophetic to us of what is in God's mind relative to human salvation; to God Himself it is the vindication of the character which He looks for in His children, and looks for, alas! so often in vain. No one who thus interprets it will quarrel with the phrase, "for Christ's sake," unscriptural though it be; for it will be understood to mean "for the soul's sake," "for man's sake," man, that is, as seen in Christ. If the Devil have no business with the best tunes, as little reason is there

for indulging a false theology in a fixity of tenure with regard to consecrated and time-honoured diction, which, rightly interpreted, conveys a meaning noble, pure and good. In a certain sense it might be permissible to speak of Christ's holiness as standing against our sinfulness to the eye of God, in a compensatory light, when the judgment is passed upon human nature as a whole. But it must be admitted that there is peril in the expression, if it lead us to fancy that God will accept any compensation in lieu of our own self-surrender to His will.

Holiness in its very essence is a personal matter. If a vital faith be the spring of righteousness, then by Him who sees the end from the beginning may such a faith be fairly "imputed for righteousness," reckoned as involving that of which it is not only the earnest, but the active seed, the producing power. If, again, repentance mean the rejection of sin in the heart, then may repentance fairly win from God that full acceptance which, "not imputing their trespasses unto them," places men already in His sight virtually where they are at length to arrive. This is only to say that God graciously permits us to share and to be sustained by the blessed consciousness of the eternal issues of our own personal acts of surrender to Him. He cannot, while holiness retains its meaning, communicate to the soul with saving power the merits of a holiness from without, like a white garment laid above an unclean heart. He sends Christ to procure our repentance; He "pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent." The salvation thus assured in principle must, however, be worked out individually by each soul for itself. Be

the moment of conversion the abrupt turning-point of a radical change; or be it, as in the rarer, not less real, experience of the more blissful lives, no violent arrest, the outcome and the close of no stormy period of spiritual convulsion, which has rent the soul in twain; be it, in short, the quiet, almost insensible direction of the heart's desires, till the concentration of the spiritual energies in God is effected without any inward surprise; the work, in whatever way begun, must proceed and still proceed. By strong marches, or by slow growth, the soul must take on the image of the perfect, the spirit of Christ, the likeness of God. God will help us, Christ will aid us; but no helps and no aids will be substitutes for that life of personal religion by which we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, being transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Christianity, a wise man has said, is "for use, or it is nothing." It means the deepening life of goodness in the heart; a growing power to resist the seductions of self-interest, worldliness, unbrotherliness; a progressive purification of the motives and the conduct; a victory over appetite and passion; a more courageous reliance upon the virtues of truth in speech, fairness in dealing, charity in judgment, generosity in forgiveness. It means the gathering strength of a determination to "let the dead past bury its dead," and to redeem the time for the kingdom of God; to assert the dominion of the living conscience in all affairs, little and large; to provide, in private life and in public duty, things honest, not only in

the sight of men, but where no human eye can scan; to walk, not merely in soundness of doctrine, but in newness of life. If it do not mean this, if it do not urge to this, if it feed the mind with notions fine and vain, tickle the feelings with profitless pleasures, not cleansing the heart, not elevating the character, not softening the greed of the market, the asperities of party, the jealousies of the Church, not consecrating the aims of toil or enlarging the spirit of patriotism, not meliorating and enriching the life of to-day, not spiritualizing the hopes of the hereafter; then is Emerson's word profoundly true, it cannot "save you from the Satan that you are."

Furthermore, wherever we find these and the like tendencies for good, working in the heart of man and beautifying the life of man, there we behold the activity of that influence which is the "power of God unto salvation." Whether or not we can trace directly or indirectly to Christ the origination of the impulse which brings these blessed fruits of life to birth, they are what he came on earth to foster and sustain; they are witnesses to the reality of his reading of human duty and human capacity; they bear out the truth of his message to man. It is "a right definition of a Christian, according to the Scripture," so Robert Barclay, greatest of Scottish theologians, has affirmed, "that he is one who hath the spirit of Christ and is led by it." If this be so, then the final test of salvation, and of belonging to Christ, is not one of knowledge or of opinion, but of temper, of principle, of character. The world has doubts about the nature of the divine

claims of Christ, and about their validity, supposing their nature to be agreed upon. But that Christ came on earth to establish the kingdom of the better, purer, simpler, nobler, truer life, all can understand. And in proportion as salvation is felt to consist in an entrance into the power and spirit of this kingdom, will men long to become partakers in its blessings and its promises.

III.

Of the things which have been said, this is the sum. Salvation is the soul's attainment of moral emancipation and spiritual health; the agency which Christianity proposes for effecting this is the presentation of a perfect manhood, in such a way as to draw the heart to it, and move the will. The spiritual portrait of Christ is limned in the beatitudes; this is the spiritual portrait also of the true Christian. Would you know if you are in a state of salvation? Measure your heart, your will, your life, by this standard. Would you gain the power to set out upon this path of holiness? Open your spirit to the influences of Christ.

We ask, in closing, has this agency proved itself successful? Does the proclaiming of it constitute the true Gospel of God? Experience answers, Yes. Ethical systems have failed to secure the control over men's motives, to subdue their passions, and to supplant their self-interests. Theological confessions have left, too often, the heart untouched, the life unmoved. But Christ is still the great spiritual deliverer, "able also to save them

to the uttermost that come unto God by him." His mission meets the deepest want of our time and of all time. Simple hearts, approaching him in their simplicity, depraved natures drawing to him from the midst of their despairs, have found, in the influence of his work and spirit, the strength to renounce their evil and find the way of light and life. They have reached, through him, the experience of divine forgiveness; the burden of past regrets has been lifted off, a blessing has fallen upon their path, and the future has been made clear.

There is an aspect of Christendom in which it may be regarded as presenting the debris of a colossal failure. Professing to command the prerogative of pronouncing an authoritative verdict upon the problems of divine science which vex the intellect of man, it has succeeded in stirring up an endless variety of conflicting opinion on the subject of these problems. But this is not the failure of Christianity; it is the failure only of theologians. It is the rebuke to the over-haste and daring ambition of despotic dogmatism; it is no reproach to the gracious aims and healthful measures of Christ. Our salvation standeth not in the perfection of a science of God; a result not to be expected all at once, nor to be gained except through a more patient and unbiassed investigation of the data of divine revelation than has yet been made. It is the dominion of Christ in the heart, the spirit of Christ in the life, that regenerates and saves. Here Christianity has won its real triumphs, here it has proved its efficacy to guide the aspirations and secure the vital good of man.

Creeds may change; human nature may be analyzed afresh; new codes of duty may express the developed action of conscience, the fuller insight of the Christian mind; but so long as man remains man, the hand of Christ will prove the potent lever to lift him to the life of holiness, the life of God. The voice of many hearts on earth preludes the song of universal joy above: "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ."

VI.

Jesus Christ.

By CHARLES BEARD, B.A.

"What think ye of Christ?" There is a sense in which this is the deepest and most urgent question which theology can ask. And that not merely in the minds of those who regard Christ as the only manifestation of the Divine which human faculties can adequately grasp, and to whom therefore an investigation into his nature is equivalent to a search into the deep things of the character of God. For there are others, of whom I own myself one, who look upon Christ as the most signal manifestation of that infusion of the human with the Divine which is an universal fact, and who find in him the typical example of the method and finest achievement of human goodness. But it is something more than a mere theological question. Upon the answer which we give to it depends our whole interpretation of human history for the last 1800 years. For putting aside all specifically theological considerations, and looking at the matter from the simply human and historical point of

view, Christ is the strongest, most enduring, most vivid force that was ever introduced into the world. I will not waste your time by familiar contrasts between the humility and obscurity of his origin, and the imperial part which he has played in the development of man's destiny: measured by the mere amount and weight of their actual influence, the greatest names pale before his. Plato has not moulded so many minds: Alexander did not so change the course of history: the unity which Rome imposed upon civilized peoples extended over a smaller area than the unity of Christendom: Buddha and Mahomet won their triumphs over only the secondary races of the world. It was the strangest and most unexpected of intellectual revolutions —a revolution which Seneca and Tacitus would have contemptuously pronounced impossible—that Jerusalem should teach Athens and Rome; now stranger still to us, for we recognize it as the religious blending of Semitic with Aryan thought. Sometimes for good, sometimes for evil, Christianity has moulded mediæval and modern history: it civilized the barbarians when decaying Rome fell of its own crumbling bulk: it alternately disparaged and preserved the monuments of ancient literature: it preached the peace of God, and kindled a thousand wars: it has kept alive the flame of holiness in innumerable hearts, and has built up the Papacy: art owes to it its finest inspirations, but it has usually turned a chilling face towards science: it has put the Bible into all men's hands, and with the Bible the image of Christ, and it has given birth to an Inquisition and lighted the fires of Smithfield. But always it has been, and is still, the most moving thing in the

world—exercising men's minds, calling out their controversial energies, rousing their passions, swaying their conduct, filling them with immortal hopes, bearing perpetual witness to the unseen. From what fountain flowed this mighty stream? Are we to go back only to the carpenter's cottage at Nazareth, and the noble and sweet traditions of Hebrew thought amid "the poor in spirit;" or must we dare a dizzy flight to the ages before time was, when the Father took counsel of the salvation of a yet uncreated world with the Eternal Son? And yet, again, who cannot but regret that such a dust and turmoil of controversy, theological, philosophical, historical, should rise about the gracious figure of the Son of Man, whose words, whenever we are able to listen to them with unprejudiced ears, strike with such a kindling power on the conscience, wake such unsatisfied longings after goodness in the heart? Would that the old days could come again, in which disciples, yet undisturbed by controversy, yet unperplexed by speculation, and forgetting all the responsibilities of the future in the happy peace of the present, hung upon the lips and followed the footsteps of him who spake "as never man spake"!

Two theories as to the nature of Christ unequally divide mankind: according to one, he is human, human in birth, human in nature, human in passion, human in temptation, human in death; according to the other, perfect God and perfect man, one Christ, "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." There was once a third theory, usually associated with the name of Arius, which assigned to Christ an intermediate

station, overtopping the human, yet not attaining the full and underived majesty of the Divine. It is older than Arius, though perhaps not in the distinctively Arian shape; as I have generally described it, it was the faith of Paul, as well as of that latest Evangelist whom we call John. No other theory can allege so much scriptural evidence in its favour, and yet it has long ago disappeared: even in contemporary churches which profess above all things else to be scriptural, there are no signs of its revival. And the reason is, that if it saved the absolute and undivided Deity of the Father, it was at the same time fatal to the true humanity of the Son. Only in its worst and darkest times has the Church been willing to let the Son of Man go: even when his Deity was conceived of as most necessary to the completed work of Atonement, men felt that God was infinitely far off from them if they could not claim a real unity with Christ. Throughout the first ages, double and opposing forces were acting at the same time upon the Christian mind: on the one side, natural affection and awe, tending as years went on to the apotheosis of Jesus, and a systematizing feeling that a belief in his Deity would round off and compact the structure of Christian doctrine: on the other, the echo of his human voice vibrating in tradition, the sight of his kinsfolk still tilling the ancestral fields, the local associations with his wanderings, his teaching, his death—in a word, the recollection of all that had made him a man among men. So the Church took refuge in the conception of a God-man, in which it has rested, with comparatively little protest, ever since. If you question the abstract conceivability of such

a being, no one has any answer to give you: the mind necessarily attaches itself first to one side of the conception and then to the other, but practically gives up the impossible task of combining them into an intelligible whole. But the conception remains a testimony, on the one hand, to the desire of at least the first ages for a visible and conceivable God; and yet, on the other, much more a testimony to the invincible reluctance of the Church in all ages to let go the humanity of Christ.

The intellectual history of the second and third centuries is that of the development of the theory of Christ's nature contained in the Proem to the fourth Gospel, into that Athanasian doctrine which is formulated in the Nicene Creed. Three explanations may be given of this process. The first, the ordinary Protestant view, can hardly be called an explanation at all, and is besides contrary to the facts of the case; it holds that the assertion of Christ's Deity was plainly in Scripture from the first, and that all that the Church did was to define it, in answer to doubts and heresies. The second, the Catholic theory, at least explains facts, if only it can be supported by evidence; according to it, the Church, divinely guided, and always preserved from error by the indwelling Spirit of God, presided over the gradual development of religious truth, from the hints and indications of it given in the New Testament. The third, or philosophical view, finds this process of thought analogous to processes which are always going on in the intellectual world. New ideas suffer modification from ideas already accepted, and, if they conquer at all, conquer only by compromise. Fresh

forces are deflected from their path, and suffer diminution of their energy from forces that have been long at work. The characteristically Semitic idea of an infinite gulf fixed between the majesty of God and the littleness of man—an idea which is Mahommedan as well as Jewish—mingled in the minds of Gentile converts with recollections of gods who held converse with men, to whom they were little superior: of heroes, the offspring of a divine and a human parent, who climbed the shining heights of heaven in the strength of courage and self-sacrifice: of an Olympus, so easy to human access, that the meanest and wickedest of Roman emperors found the way. Philosophy aided the process for which mythology had smoothed the path: from Plato to Philo, from Philo to John, from John to Athanasius, the line of intellectual influence is easy to trace. And we can count every stage of the development. Try to make the ante-Nicene Fathers humanitarian or trinitarian, in the full sense of either word, and you are distorting history to force it to serve a theological purpose. But estimate the strength and the direction of the intellectual forces which beat upon Christianity as it emerged from the obscurity of Judæa into the full stir and turmoil of the Gentile world, and then weigh the conditions under which its triumph was alone possible, and you will understand, I think, how the peasant Prophet of Galilee became the "very God of very God," who when the fulness of time was come was "made man."

Not the less does the theology of the fourth Gospel as it stands contain, if also it contains something more, the speculative explanation of the facts narrated in the first

three. Whence this brilliant manifestation of the force and beauty possible to humanity? Whence these pregnant and piercing words, this winning charm of goodness, this inspiring faith in human nature, this completeness of self-consecration, this sureness of ethical touch, this clearness of religious insight, this abiding sense of God's help and presence? What shall we call the force that has moulded a human life into such harmonious unity, into so symmetrical a strength? How does this manifestation of Divine power stand related to God's general dealings with mankind? When we look at Christ, what are we to think of patriarchs and prophets of old, of all sweet singers in Israel, of the strength of the hero, and the whiteness of the saint, and the wisdom of the Rabbi? Still more, can we bring into relation to him the old Greek sages, with their earnest, childlike search into the mysteries of the universe; and Socrates, with his homely human wisdom; and the reverent yet pitiful awe of Æschylus and Sophocles before the mysterious sadness of human destiny; and the sweetness of him—the Buddha—who, more than any other, preceded Christ on the path of self-sacrifice for man? The latest Evangelist supplies the answer. All wisdom, all goodness, all strength, are but manifestations of that Word of God, that Divine Reason, which is His Essence. The true light is known by its universality: it is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; it cometh to its own, and its own receive it not; but not the less is it the source of all truth, the inspirer of all goodness, the light of all our seeing, the life

of all our strength. No human soul but is warmed and illumined by some spark of this divine fire, a fire that, however neglected and quenched, can never be wholly extinguished; while there are those whom it kindles into heroism, or moulds, after long discipline, into saintliness, or inspires with thoughts that breathe and words that burn. And Christ is the finished manifestation of what God can and will do for a faithful human soul. He is the perfected type of a process which is begun in every man, yet complete in none. He is the most signal proof of the fact that God is not only about us and above us, but in us. Humanity finds its highest realization, not in stoical self-reliance, but in childlike trust: *he* is most truly man who stands in closest union with God. Christ is the first-born of many brethren: humanity claims him as its own: his strength is our strength, his victory our victory, his God our God; the help which was his waits for us also, and he leads us into the presence of the universal Father.

We shall again do something to define our characteristic attitude to Christ, if we ask and answer the question, Does the centre of gravity of the Christian system lie in his life or in his death? in the charm of his character and the wisdom of his teachings, or in the interpretation put by Apostles and Evangelists on his cross and his resurrection? For it remains a fact that it is very difficult to find any trace of what are called the peculiar doctrines of the gospel in Christ's own words; and that if Paul's Epistles had never been written, and the world had been left to the sole instruction of the Evangelists, what is called Evangelical Christianity would never have existed. The doctrine of

the Atonement and that of the Deity of Christ are more closely associated than may always have been seen at first sight: it was not without a meaning that Anselm laid down those lines of the vicarious sacrifice, which so many centuries accepted, in a treatise on the Incarnation—*Cur Deus Homo*—Why was God made man? Both conceptions belong to the same order of ideas: the logical necessities of the Atonement demand the God-man. From this point of view, then, Christ's appearance upon earth is a divine transaction, the fulfilment of a plan conceived in the secrecy of the Eternal Councils before time was. It is the answer to universal and secular needs of humanity: only in appearance has it anything about it that is local or temporal. The "fulness of time" is no more than an arbitrary expression of the Divine will: all that is human in Christ's life sinks into a secondary place: its significance is focussed in the one burning point of the Agony and the Cross. Paul was resolved that he would not know Christ after the flesh; and accordingly his letters, the earliest literary records of Christianity, contain, with exception of the words at the institution of the Supper, not the faintest echo of Christ's living teaching, nor preserve for us a single trait of his character. His interest in Christ is all on the divine plane; as the interest now of Christians who pride themselves on being Pauline is in an Almighty Saviour, who secures them against the wrath of God and the pains of hell. Whereas, on the other hand, if you leave on one side the anger of God, the wiles of the devil, the flames of the pit, the universal depravity of man, as figments of the theological imagination, you may conceive of Christ's life

as simply, naturally, beautifully human. You may trace its wisdom to its sources in the clear insight of psalmist and prophet, and the large and liberal philosophy of Hillel. You may fancy him growing in strength and beauty in his Galilean home, as a flower accepts the nourishment of rains and dews and kindly earth, and graciously unfolds itself to the sun. Through the transparent veil of myth which the Evangelist has hung round his entrance upon public life, you may watch him encountering and vanquishing the temptations natural to his age, his powers, his purposes. Throughout the whole of his career he may be measured by human standards, judged of by human analogies: he has his seasons of depression, his moments of exaltation, like weaker men: his nature responds, with a truly human sensitiveness, to the love that is lavished on him, and the malice that lies in wait to trip him up: and his faith in the indestructibility of human goodness is, it seems to me, not the faith of an immortal and serene benignity, but of a mortal fellow-feeling that has itself known trouble and temptation. But why do I waste words any more? I claim this life in all its strength, its beauty, its symmetry, for humanity: without it, my conception of what humanity is and may be would be maimed and incomplete. I cannot consent to make it a mere factor in a divine transaction; I want to feel its inspiring, soothing, liberating influence on my own soul. And that cannot be if I am to conceive of Christ as a mysterious being, altogether without parallel in the world's history: in whom was a side of strength to which nothing that is in me presents any analogy: who, while mortal, was immortal;

while ignorant, was omniscient; while confined within the bounds of a human personality, was the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent, the Infinite, the Absolute. My sorest need is for the strong, bright, beautiful Son of Man.

I am ready for the objection at this point, that a perfect man is as much out of the course of nature as a Man-god, and that whoever accepts the one can hardly, at least on grounds of abstract reasonableness, reject the other. But I have not advanced the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness. I do not know what sinlessness means as applied to human nature; and it is impossible to predicate sinlessness of a life which is known to us only in fragments. Imperfection is of the very essence of humanity; while at the same time the characteristic of human excellence is an imperfection that knows itself, and constantly strains towards the perfect. Who can doubt that in those secret places of Christ's nature into which his disciples could not penetrate, and of which therefore they have left no record, there was an awful sense of the infinity of holiness, and of the impossibility of completely fulfilling the exceeding broad commands of God? From any true apprehension of the humanity of Christ, the element of progress cannot be excluded: a perceptible interval separates the mature prophet who saw, with resolved mind, his career end in disappointment and death, from the eager reformer who in the first flush of success beheld "Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven." And growth implies at least relative imperfection: a present stronger than the past, a future completer than the present. Nor have I any theological interest in the abstract doctrine of Christ's sinlessness: in

so far as it detracts from the genuineness of his humanity, and makes *that* difficult of apprehension, I am swayed the other way. But then it will be evident, from all that I have already said, that I find no fault in Jesus. To criticise his words—to subject his actions to keen, dissolvent analysis—to form another estimate of his career than that which lies on the surface of the record—are things which would never have suggested themselves to me: I am content to abide in the admiring love of a disciple. But I have read many criticisms, I have formed a judgment upon many cavils, and they do not touch me. I am ready to believe that even in words of Christ which I only half understand, there are unexplored depths of wisdom. I do not wish any speech of Christ's unspoken, or any deed of his undone. To me, words, character, life, are blended into full harmony, and unite to form "one entire and perfect chrysolite." I do not ask what untrodden heights of holiness still towered above the Jesus whom I love: I do not anticipate a Christ that is to be, in whose glories the Christ to whom so many ages have looked up shall be hidden. When new religions ask my allegiance, or philosophy assures me that in the light of fresh knowledge it is time to have done with religion, I am content to say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

But apart from the inspiring and elevating effect upon humanity of such a human life as this, the strength and beauty of Christ's character stand in very close relation to his authority as a teacher. For it must be remembered that not even morals, and much less religion, can be

practically taught on any scientific method. Men have admired for more than two thousand years the clear discrimination, the keen insight into human nature, the logical precision, of Aristotle's Ethics; but how many have been the better for them? Analysis is wholly without inspiration; and the most careful adduction and classification of instances prick no conscience and fire no heart. I do not mean that men are not as curious as ever about the basis of ethics; but that very fact implies that they are eager to find intellectual justification for what they feel compelled to do, whether they can justify it or not, and that conscience is before and above the methods by which it is sought to be explained. But the really great teachers—not the men who build up systems, but the reformers who make revolutions—are they who speak out of the fulness of their own hearts, the depth of their personal experience. They do not argue, but assert. They do not forge a logical chain, equally strong in every link, with which to bind the reason, but make their clear appeal to the conscience and the heart. The sign that they have prevailed is, not that the hearer knows his last objection to be beaten down, his last doubt to be removed, but that his conscience echoes the word, and his heart leaps up to perform it. So, in like manner, the characteristic office of the religious seer is to report of the Eternal Realities what he has himself discerned: if he does not live with God, he cannot speak of God: if the awful touch be not upon his own soul, his words cannot convey to others the awe of the Infinite. Presently it may be the business of the theologian to reduce, if he can, these stammering revelations

to form and system; though I think we are learning every day how little form and system are possible in relation to matters which in their very nature not only transcend the powers of the human mind, but even seem to confound them in hopeless contradiction. But the men who give the world a fresh impulse towards God, who revive churches, who cleanse society, who impose upon their fellows new and higher ideals of duty—the men in whose path heroes and saints are born, as flowers follow the footsteps of the spring—derive their power from the fact that they speak of that which they know, and have put to the test of living, and have found to be their own strength and peace and joy. If among living men they are to be life-giving spirits, it is on condition that it is their own heart that they pour forth, their own life that they share. Why does the same word of exhortation come heavily weighted with persuasion from these lips, while on those it wakens only weariness and disgust? The teacher must be behind the word, the life must support and illustrate the doctrine. When a good man, who has made trial of various experience, and has grown stronger, calmer, more patient, more pitiful, as the storms and the sunshine of life have beaten upon his head, tells us that goodness is the secret of living, it is hard not to believe him. Shall we not believe Christ upon his word, when he speaks to us of the deep things of God—Christ, upon whom the steady brightness of the Divine Presence habitually rested, and whose life was lived in the strength of a childlike trust?

It is all the easier to believe Christ when we have fully realized that a reproach sometimes made against the gos-

pel is, if it be a reproach, nevertheless true;—namely, that in its morality there is nothing new. I do not mean that the ethics of the New Testament have not a colour of their own which sufficiently marks them off from the stoicism of Epictetus or that latest of all systems—I hardly know what to call it—which we owe to the ingenuity of Herbert Spencer. But the practical principles of ethics are in all civilized ages almost the same; and the special tone of systems arises, not from any new discovery incorporated in any, but from the prominence given to this or that side of morals. It is possible to make an anthology from Greek poets and philosophers, from Roman moralists, from the traditions of the Rabbinical schools, from the records of Indian wisdom, in which every moral precept of the New Testament shall find a place. Such an anthology could not indeed be substituted for the New Testament; it would have neither life, nor fire, nor constraining force; but it would show that upon the ethical field little had been left for Christ to discover and proclaim. But that is so far from being a weakness of Christianity, as some persons thoughtlessly suppose, as in fact to constitute a large part of its strength. For it is not the nice distinctions of casuistry which sway men, or any unfamiliar reading of the facts and obligations of life, were such possible, but the moral impulses which have been slowly accumulating in the blood of many generations, and are ready to wake into action at a powerful voice of inspiration. A great writer of our own century died with the simple words upon his lips, "Be good, my dears: be good." It is the one thing needful: we all understand it: there can

be no intellectual originality in the statement of it: but how to utter it with so persuasive a voice as to touch the heart, and quicken the conscience, and steel the will! This is precisely the marvellous power of Christ: not that he saw life in an ethically new light, but that he poured around old affections and obligations a light and a charm all his own. And this it is, too, which makes the universality of his moral claim. His distinctive principles, if he can be truly said to have any, are as wide as human nature. They underlie differences of age, race, sex, circumstance, and go down to those depths of humanity in which we are all alike. There is no uncorrupted heart which they do not make to throb with a quicker pulse. There is no unspoiled conscience in which they do not wake an answering echo.

No doubt it may be said with truth that, in opposition to the prevailing ethical sentiment of a fierce, a cruel, a selfish age, Christ brought into vivid relief the softer and humaner virtues; the gospel throughout is true to its first words, which promise the kingdom of heaven to "the poor in spirit." But it is in the conception of the kingdom itself that I should find the focus of Christian ethics. It was the habit of classical antiquity—a habit from which Christianity is to some degree a reaction—to think more of the state and less of the citizen than we do: for the old publicist, the citizen existed for the commonwealth; with us, the commonwealth is only the aggregate of citizens. So Plato had his ideal state as well as Christ; though the one, full of recollections of the palmy days of Athens, called it Republic, while the other, going back to a time

when only Jehovah ruled in Israel, named it Kingdom of God. But what, in the Republic, external laws and regulations, minute, innumerable, coercive, were to do, was to be accomplished in the other by the spirit of love, and duty, and self-sacrifice, living in every single heart, and spreading from heart to heart by silent ethical contagion. It seems to me a wonderful thing—which we should all see to be wonderful had not long custom dulled our sense—this conception of the practical oneness of individual regeneration and social reform; this thought that laws cannot produce character, while, on the other hand, character supersedes laws and all but makes them needless; this belief that if once you can touch every single heart with the awe of God and the love of man, the highest objects of social life are potentially accomplished. Who cannot see in the pages of the earlier Gospels how this thought of the kingdom of God was constantly in Christ's mind: how it was the centre round which his ethical system, so far as he can be said to have one, crystallized: how he laboured to fix it, in all its aspects and applications, in the minds of his disciples, by metaphor and parable: how it summed up in a word all that he lived and died for? Nor can any heavier indictment be brought against historical Christianity than that it has been faithless to Christ exactly where faithfulness was of highest worth: that now it has narrowed the kingdom to mean the church, a walled garden of the Lord, outside of which the unransomed children of God live hard and sad and unlovely lives; and again, has denied that earth can ever be a kingdom of God at all, and has referred souls pining

for liberty, and hearts crushed by intolerable wrong, for satisfaction of their longing to a dim and distant heaven. And all the while men only need to believe in a kingdom of God, possible here and now, in the very midst of sorrows waiting for consolation, and wrongs crying out to be redressed, to make it a blessed reality.

In like manner I must honestly confess that I know nothing of what are called the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. This complete depravity of human nature, this Divine wrath lowering over a disobedient earth, this universal incapacity of pleasing God, this transaction between God's justice and His mercy by which the innocent pays the penalty and the guilty go free, this appropriation, by the believer, of merits not his own, this world lying in darkness and the shadow of death outside a ransomed and rejoicing Church, are conceptions which cannot be co-ordinated with that of Christ's genuine humanity. These things, were they true, would make a break between the Old Testament and the New which would be difficult indeed to bridge over, which in fact theologians have attempted to bridge over by expedients which are the disgrace of reasonable criticism. For myself, I feel it necessary to be able to unite Christ, in an organic unity of thought, with psalmist and prophet—not merely to bind together the old dispensation and the new by elaborate intellectual carpentry of prediction and fulfilment, metaphor and fact, type and antitype. Christianity is the consummate blossom of Hebrew faith, in which new elements had slowly been developing themselves in the centuries between the Evangelical Prophet and the coming of

Christ: Jesus lived and died a Jew: the faith and worship of his fathers were enough for him at the very moment that he was transmuting them into a world religion. He knew, I am persuaded, that after he had poured the new wine into the old bottles, the bottles might be trusted to burst of themselves; that whatever in rite and usage was local and temporary would drop off, and the essential and universal be left to do their work and win their widening way. So I look far beyond the complicated doctrinal systems of the Reformation, beyond even the Creeds in which an earlier Christianity strove to crystallize speculation, to Christ himself, in proof of the simplicity of all true religion. That there is one God and Father of mankind, whom we are to love with all our heart and mind and soul and strength; that all men are brethren, bound to one another by inseparable ties, making on one another indefeasible claims; and that the one Divine Spirit lives and moves in us all, strengthening us for service and kindling us to love,—to believe this is enough for life, for toil, for hope, for trust, for death. For it was when men began to think about religion more and to feel it less, that they hedged it around with definitions and built it up into the symmetry of a system.

Shall we say, then, that Christianity was no more than a finer Judaism? or was there nothing in Christ's Theism —to use the theological language of our own day—which gave it a colour of its own? Yes, the characteristic theology of the gospel is shut up in one word, which has just, almost inadvertently, escaped my lips: God, the Infinite, the Omnipotent, the Eternal, the Maker and Ruler of

countless worlds, is the Father of mankind, in the hollow of whose hand we lie always, who has numbered the very hairs of our heads, who watches over us with a very perfect love and a compassion that cannot change. No one will ask me to prove that this is an idea unknown to ethnic religions and philosophies, but it may not have occurred to you how there is in the Old Testament only the faint adumbration of it. The great religious poet to whom we owe the 103rd Psalm, dares not speak of it except in the hesitating voice of metaphor: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." The later Isaiah comes nearest to it when he says, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not." But these utterances, which stand almost, if not quite alone, in the old Hebrew literature, beautiful and touching as they are, fall far short of the grand and infinitely pathetic thought of Christ, that there is no weak, ignorant, sinful, rebellious son of Adam but may lift up hands of supplication to the All-holy with the cry, Abba, Father! and that as no earthly father who was worthy of the name could ever close his heart to the son of his flesh who, whatever his offences against the sweet sanctities of home, longed with the longing of genuine repentance for return and pardon, so God is not only always waiting to be merciful, but goes out to meet the prodigal on the way. This, to me, is the centre point and heart of Christianity. It differentiates it from all religions before or since. I should look upon faithfulness or unfaithfulness to it as indicating the true relation of a man or a church to Christ. It was an easy thing to believe

once—hard, too hard, now. We, unhappy, come upon our Theistic faith, if we have any, from another side; and God, for us, withdraws Himself behind a machinery of laws, through which it is difficult to see a Father's face and to feel the touch of a Father's hand. We are hastening back to the old Jewish thought: we are no longer members of a family, but subjects of a government; and God, who was our Father, once more looks down upon us in the stern majesty of a King. What egress we are to find presently from this sad practical perplexity, I cannot tell; nor is it for me to discuss these difficulties now. But Christ tells me, and I have an unspeakable joy in believing him, that in God I have a Father, who watches over my individual fate, to whom I can confide all my joys and sorrows and temptations and sins, and upon whose faithful heart I can rest my weary head when the burthen of my life is greater than I can bear. And it seems to me that in so far as this scientific age abandons this thought, it is wandering away from Christ.

What, then, did Jesus come for, do you ask, if he accomplished no atonement, if he burst upon the world with no elaborate system of theological truth? From the intellectual side, I might reply that the development of Hebrew thought had been one long preparation for the birth of a world religion; and that he took what was universal in the faith of his fathers, and fusing it into deeper unity in the fire of his own soul, proclaimed it in such a way as to catch and charm the ear of humanity. There were Hebrews who could not divest it of its Hebrew shell, to whom in their seclusion in the wilderness beyond

Jordan it was always only a finer form of Judaism: the Gentile mind soon laid hold of it, and fashioned it into some likeness of familiar speculation. But, in my view, it would never have passed the gulf between the Semitic and the Aryan mind, except in that simplest and most universal form which it took upon the lips of Christ. You know the old, well-worn story: how it spread in the synagogues of Asia Minor and in the Ghetto of Rome: how the poor in spirit everywhere welcomed it with eager joy: how women by its help rose into a true human dignity, and slaves forgot their stripes and chains: how the sinful drew from it the hope of better things, and the sorrowful found comfort, and behind the lurid foreground of Roman war and greed and lust, the faithful discerned the bright dawning of the kingdom of God. The gospel spread because it was indeed good news. And men, saved from sin, from doubt, from despondency, from despair, looked up to their Saviour with eyes of grateful affection.

And shall it not be so yet again? This is a religiously disturbed age, full of scepticism and hesitations, putting its doubts and denials strongly, but reticent as to its faith; sometimes inclined to wonder whether religion be not a remnant of childish habits of thought which will slowly fade out of the blood, and again clinging with a pathetic reliance to some Eternal Realities, though *what* it can hardly tell. But on the whole it seems to me to be resolved on two things: first, that in religion, as in every other department of thought, it will affirm no more than it surely knows; and secondly, that whatever else may change or pass, the moral law remains, one, changeless,

eternal. If this be so, the days of elaborate theological systems are gone: let men who would willingly have the ninth century back again, sing the Athanasian Creed; let those for whom the scientific development of the last three centuries does not exist, pin their faith on Calvin's Institutes; the disciples of the new time must have simpler beliefs, ethics as wide as humanity, a God equal in grandeur to a freshly revealed universe. New world-philosophies, new social systems, have sprung up in abundance in these latter years; wild and foolish efforts, sparing nothing established, no matter how sacred, have been made to re-organize society on new principles; but has any fresh moral ideal been presented to men? Do not all reformers alike strain after that equal justice, that mutual helpfulness, that assured peace, that universal happiness, which Christ summed up in one word as the kingdom of God? No human ingenuity can get outside the universal: the true conditions of life were discovered long ago, nor can any subtlety of speculation take away from or add to them. I know that there are philosophical systems which leave no room for religion as Christ conceived it. If we, and all that we are—quick mind, warm heart, keen conscience, fixed will—are but parts of a material machine, which grinds on for ever towards its destined dissolution, it is difficult to see what better right we have to a religion than the puppets in a village show, which simulate life when their strings are pulled, and seem to speak with a voice which is not their own. If this is the worst of all possible worlds, and death a welcome escape from a life which no man can make

either noble or happy, it is idle to talk of a God whose love is as unreal as His power is bounded. But there are other and more hopeful searchers after truth than these, who, while facing every fact of science, and lending an ear to all deliverances of philosophy, feel the necessity of an Eternal stay and a hope that will not die to-morrow; who would fain leave the world a little better than they found it, and, if they might, would see before they go the grey dawn in the east of a brighter and a happier day. And these men are learning more and more every day that they cannot escape Christ. Their social objects are his, whatever the methods by which they strive to realize them. The simpler their faith in Divine Realities, the more does it put on the likeness of his simplicity. They look back through eighteen centuries, darkened with the dust and deafened by the noise of controversy, and discern that, after all, the secret of eternal life is to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. And soon, I doubt not, these children of the newest time, keen-eyed with its knowledge, yet perplexed with its mysteries and its hesitations too, will find themselves standing side by side with the simple, the sorrowful, the poor in spirit, and drinking in the consolation of the Master's promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

VII.

The Bible.

By Professor J. E. CARPENTER, M.A.

"*Whatsoever things were written aforetime*," said the Apostle Paul, "*were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the writings might have hope.*" Paul, then, it would seem, was ready to look on all the past as precious, and with the ease with which a mighty mind draws from the simplest act the largest principle, he places beside a verse drawn from his own ancient Scriptures the wider lesson that all genuine experience carries with it something available for other men. So he points an exhortation to the Christians at Corinth with a line from the Greek poet Menander, and on Mars Hill he can best confirm the trust in the Divine Fatherhood in the words of a hymn by Aratus, his own fellow-countryman though no Jew, "*For we also are his offspring.*" The literature of ancient religion which modern scholarship has opened to us, belongs to a still ampler range. It is not limited either to Hebrew or Hellenic piety. Through the vast Asiatic continent which has been the mother of

so many races and so many civilizations, you may trace from land to land the uprising of holy thought and the strenuousness of faithful endeavour. Beyond its most western border, from the valley of the Nile to the banks of the Ganges, nay, to the very shores of the Pacific, every great faith has uttered itself in prayers and hymns, in philosophy, history, law, which gathered round them a sanctity as of Heaven itself. Ask an Egyptian of the days of Moses, and you will learn that the consecrated ritual which he laid in the tomb of his dead was as venerable to him as the Ten Commandments were to Israel, or the Lord's Prayer to us. Listen to his chant of praise, and you will think you have alighted on some missing psalm: "*God is one in himself, sole who produces all, the ancient of heaven, the oldest of the earth, the lord of time, the author of eternity. He is the causer of pleasure and light, maker of grass for the cattle and of fruitful trees for man, causing the fish to live in the river and the birds to fill the air, lying awake when all men sleep to seek out the good of his creatures. He listens to the poor who is in distress, gentle of heart when one cries unto him, deliverer of the timid man from the violent, judging the poor, the poor and the oppressed.*" Traverse the desert to the great plains of Mesopotamia, and you may join in the litanies of immemorial centuries uttering confession of sin, the cry of repentance, the entreaty for forgiveness. And if you say that these bear no canonical character, and were never gathered together into the authoritative exposition of a faith, you have but to go a little further, to call up the follower of the mountain prophet of Persia and listen to his prayers for purity, to sit beside the

Brahman as he recites his mystic hymns, to enter a Buddhist monastery and inquire for the books which teach the Eight-fold Noble Path, the way of deliverance, to witness the devotion of a Chinese student to his sacred Classics, or open the Koran of the great Arabian preacher, and you will find that in one way or other each of these books contains the credentials of a religion or speaks in accents transcending those of man. Shall we ridicule such claims? The Hindu will rebuke us: "*There is only one Being who exists unmoved, yet moving swifter than the mind. He is within this universe, and yet outside this universe; whoever beholds all living creatures as in him, and him, the universal Spirit, as in all, henceforth regards no creature with contempt.*" Shall we turn away in proud neglect? The words of Gotama Buddha will remind us of our allegiance to the Master whose teachings we have not realized: "*Let goodwill without measure, impartial, unmixed, without enmity, prevail throughout the world, above, beneath, around.*" Shall we deny the worship of those who will not pray our prayers or take our name? Mohammed will utter anew the declaration of liberty, and the prophecy of union, with the fervour of an apostle: "*Every nation has a quarter of the heavens; it is God who turneth them towards it; hasten then emulously after good; wheresoever ye be, God will one day bring you all together.*" And so, beneath diverse forms, we behold men striving after one faith, one hope, one love.

Now, in this Greater Bible of the human race, what is the position of the Bible which we cherish? It takes its place among a series of books of religion not less ancient

than itself. Though it makes no claims on its own account, the same claims have been made for it which are made for the Vedas and other Scriptures of the remoter East. By what methods must it be interpreted, what place must it hold in our religious life to-day? The answer to these questions really depends upon the answer to the further question, "What is the Bible?" It is hardly too much to say that the present century has done more to solve this problem than all its predecessors. The progress of scholarship, the widening range of historical and scientific study, the more careful investigation of the grounds of belief and the nature and limits of authority in matters of religion, have all contributed to set the ancient record in new light: and if they have withdrawn from it pretensions which found no support within its pages, they have not on that account left it weak and powerless; on the other hand, they have unsealed within it fresh springs of life; they have restored it to humanity, without thereby cutting it off from God.

The Christian Bible falls apart, as we all know, into two divisions of unequal size, the Old Testament and the New: a third group lying between them, known as the Apocrypha, we may pass by; it contains nothing which will modify our main argument. The name Bible is itself a corruption of the Greek term signifying "*the Books*," and, like the titles of its two constituent collections, it is, of course, of later origin than the books themselves. What, then, are these books? Open the Old Testament, and it is not hard to discover. Here are the remains, often only fragmentary, of a whole literature. From the

far-off plains of Chaldæa came a little band of wandering tribes bound by a common ancestry from sires whom they named Abraham and Israel. They pastured their flocks on the hills of Canaan; settled for a while among the green meadows of the Nile; escaped into the desert when residence became bondage, and possession servitude; wandered through the wilderness till they were strong enough to attempt the conquest of the land where their fathers had sojourned; and then gradually spread through the heart of Palestine, amalgamating with its people and adopting its civilization. They passed through seasons of victory and times of oppression: they were harassed by external foes, they were weakened by internal divisions; but out of rude forms of government they gradually evolved an established order, and instituted a monarchy which secured outward splendour and settled organization, and, in spite of the disruption of the kingdom shortly after its foundation, was maintained in one dynasty for more than four hundred years. Its lands were invaded, its princes slain; its capital was destroyed, its people deported; but the nation could not die. Conquest could not crush them, nor exile outweary them, nor dispersion keep them from reunion, and they returned to occupy again their ancient homes, and to reconstruct in a new form the polity that had been overthrown.

Of all this the story is told in these books. It is no common story. Other peoples have left the abodes of their forefathers, and won for themselves new resting-places in untrodden fields. Other peoples have entered as conquerors, and perhaps gone out as slaves. Other peoples

have risen anew after oppression, have fought for liberty, and by their sufferings have learned how to be strong. But no other people has penned unconsciously such a record, or stamped almost every page with a character so unique. Its opening chapters, written possibly under the shadow of Babylonian temples, rest upon an adopted learning, but thrill with a religion that is all their own. Within its accents linger echoes of mythologies that have long since passed away, yet even these echoes are tuned already to a loftier faith. There are glimpses of mighty empires, and the muffled sounds of the feet of nations marching backwards and forwards over the vast tracts of central Asia: but the rise and fall of empires is at the disposal of a higher will; and the emigrant's caravan starts at the call of God. The veil is raised, now at the tent door of a wandering sheykh, now at the awful entry of the Holy of Holies; but whether in the simplicity of homely life, or in the prophet's vision, or the most solemn function of priest and people, one sublime figure dimly shapes itself through the shadow ever looming larger and larger, till tent and tabernacle and temple can hold it no more, and it becomes vast as the world, passing all space and time. Many are the vicissitudes of experience till the fulness of truth can be reached; but all that comes out of it, poetry and prophecy, law and prayer, bears its indelible impress. It matters not that the poetry is sometimes fierce and rude; that prophecy was not always correct in its anticipations; that laws were intended for conditions of society which have long since passed away,—nay, that prayer itself occasionally passes into impreca-

tion;—through all the varied phases of this literature, in its legend and romance, as in its devotion, its wisdom and philosophy, are the stern marks of a righteousness surpassing man's, claiming his obedience, and ever setting before him something better than his best.

In no other literature are these marks so clear and strong. The seers and sages of Greece wanted not noble conceptions of the nature of God, and his relations to the material world: the moralists of Rome lacked not high ideals of duty. But they do not bring us in the same way face to face with the unseen, quicken inward perception, and reveal the hidden life of things. The cosmogony of Genesis may be no truer to science than that of the Greek Hesiod, but its hymn of light and life still awakens us to the everlasting freshness of the creative power of the universe. Neither Sophocles nor Plato wrote any psalms. No Roman legislator inscribed at the head of his statutes the sublime demand, "*Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.*" Censors were not lacking to denounce national sins: but no altar coal lay on Cato's lips as on Isaiah's to kindle the flame of a new purity; and Cicero preaches, but he never prays. Doubtless the notions of righteousness which gleam through the record of Israel's piety, began with rude beginnings. So has it been with every people. But we see them grow with the nation's growth in mind and soul, till they irradiate the whole being of the world and man. And over that growth is the enlarging form of the God whose will they reflected. The limitations of primitive imagination drop away. The voice heard among the trees of Eden in the evening cool dies from

the air to re-appear among the affections of the clean heart; the mystic Presence that haunted the oak-grove, or laid his special blessing on the Bethels, the upright stones that dotted the heights of Canaan, is sought there in vain—but he is not lost, for he has found a double home in eternity and in the contrite spirit.

We do not then go to the Old Testament for legislation or for science; we go to it for the history of a religion. Ask of it what was the order of creation, or bid it describe the relations of the earth and sun, and it may contradict the records of the rocks or the teachings of the observatory. Endeavour to set up once more the polity of Israel, and a society which has not passed through its training will be plunged into anarchy. Appeal to it fierce with passion, hot with wrath, and you may justify vengeance by the pages which chronicle the massacre of Canaanites by divine command, or applaud the murder of Sisera. But you know well that these are not its highest words. Rather are they such as these: "*Do justly and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God;*" "*the Lord is gracious and full of compassion, long suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth;*" "*he desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live;*" "*I delight in mercy and not sacrifice;*" "*thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might;*" "*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" And so we may trace the deepening consciousness of God, the deepening sense of humanity, through the solemn incidents of Israel's life, wherein each epoch answers to some era in our own life-story "writ large."

It has its ordinances of law by which the will must be trained to faithfulness, its seasons of eager aspiration when new hopes dawn for a larger justice and a fuller truth, its times of grief and disappointment, of failure, weariness and perplexity, breaking forth again into fresh effort, bursting anew into gladness and joy; by the cry of doubt rises the song of human love, and with the confession of sin blends the promise of forgiveness. And so the simplest, yet the profoundest, elements of human experience are all concentrated here, and over all is the brightness of a faith in God, "like a light that grows larger and clearer," till it shines in our hearts with the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Taken as a whole, therefore, the Old Testament, understood as a literature, may be said to show us two chief things,—the rise and progress of a religion, and its effect upon life. The life which is purified and quickened by it, is the life of the nation, but also of the home, of the soul. Israel was a people; its history is that of a people; its prophets addressed the people, its laws were written for a community, its proverbs gathered up the wisdom of generations. But the record of its religion is available not only for the chosen race. Its seers and its poets were more than children of Abraham; they were men. And hence, in so far as they deal with the events of universal human experience, with the gladness or the pain of nature, with the joy or grief or sin of human hearts, they speak not to their own age, but to the world. Their horizon is no longer bounded by the hill-tops of Palestine, or even by the wider range of the dispersion: their speech loses its

Hebrew accent and can be understood in any language. The love of God, the need of a changed heart, the glory of earth and sky, are no terms of technical philosophy; they are like light and air, the very elements whereon our spirits feed. And it is in part because we find a higher testimony to them in the Old Testament than in any other of the "things written aforetime," that the Old Testament fills the place it does in our religious consciousness to-day.

But that it may yield us its full value, it is essential that it should be read in the knowledge of its origin and development. A literature can only be properly interpreted when the order of its works is known, so that the successive phases of its ideas can be estimated aright. We know now that the books formerly attributed to Moses did not come into existence all at once,—they were the production of centuries; that the prophecies gathered under the name of Isaiah proceed from several different hands; that the psalms of David may more fitly be described as the hymn-book of the second temple; that the visions of Daniel were seen not in Babylon but in Palestine, and the oppressor was not Nebuchadnezzar but Antiochus Epiphanes. These discoveries are not a loss, rather are they a gain. They do not alter a single word in the writings themselves; they only alter the light in which we regard them, by stripping them of a false meaning, and clothing them with the true. We are no longer troubled at finding historical inconsistencies and moral incongruities: neither are we disturbed because we cannot wholly trace the process of which we are able to discern some of the results. A collection of documents ranging over many hundreds of years

must of necessity exhibit wide diversity of tone and feeling. It can claim no unity but the unity of the national consciousness from which it issues. Its authors for the most part keep themselves in the background. They are satisfied to tell their story, to deliver their message, to re-edit their ancient laws, and pass away. Many books which they name have perished; and the collection which has come down to us yields constant evidence of its imperfect character. We know little of its history. It began, probably, with the labours of Ezra in the fifth century before our era, after the restoration of Jerusalem The books which had been saved from the wreck of the ancient city had been carried into exile; they had been studied, copied, enlarged by the addition of new materials. When the new temple was built and the priesthood re-established, the Law finally assumed its present shape to meet the fresh needs of the time. Gradually, houses of prayer arose over the land, and the rolls of the Prophets were put together for reading in the weekly synagogue worship. And by their side was set, in the course of years, a third division bearing the simple title of "the Writings," which received from time to time the latest additions to the literature now recognized as sacred. There, for instance, was the Psalm-book, not yet, however, arranged as we have it now. There, too, stood the great drama of Job, the love poem of the Song of Songs, the despairing philosophy of Ecclesiastes, the apocalyptic hopes of Daniel, and other books of poetry, proverbs, history. The hedge of divinity began to rise around the law. The prophets of old had spoken sometimes, with lips trembling at their own

unworthiness, with the awful warning, "Thus saith the Lord." But the books themselves raised no claim to exceptional authorship, and the collection betrays no hint of any such pretensions. Its earliest translators—at least in Egypt—felt themselves free sometimes to make important alterations in their text, or at least worked upon manuscripts varying from those on which our text is founded. Ignorant copyists have been left to blunder over words they did not understand, and perplexed interpreters have had to make guesses where exact knowledge is impossible. That is precisely what has happened to other ancient literatures. It does not destroy the value of our possession; but it warns us against asking of it what it cannot give; it justifies us in submitting it to the usual literary and historic tests; and these free it from a burden of infallibility, whether of outward fact or of moral and spiritual judgment, too great to be borne, and restore it to us as the witness of a thousand years to man's search for God, and God's response to man.

The Old Testament, however, though it occupies the larger room in our Bibles, holds not the chief place in our affections. The story of the religion of Israel is not really complete till it passes into the religion of Jesus, the religion of man. And it is taken up, therefore, expanded and filled with a fresh life, in the New Testament. Here, then, we have the precious record of the origin of Christianity. If we can learn anywhere what Christianity is, these books must surely tell us the secret. There are four biographies of Jesus which present to us the sublime figure of the preacher of the kingdom of God, or again

the incarnate Logos, the fullest manifestation of the Father, first to the Jews, and then to the world. The first three of these treat the life and history of their subject in the same general style. They reproduce the outlines of his teaching with tolerable harmony, with just such variations of tone and thought as show that while they may be classed together, they were yet written more or less independently of each other. The fourth Gospel starts from a wholly different conception of Christ's person and character, and upon any theory of its authorship was written considerably later than the other three. There is a book which takes up the story of the apostles after the death of Jesus, giving special prominence to Peter and Paul, and carrying on the narrative of their ministry some thirty years. There are letters proceeding apparently from some of the Twelve and their immediate associates, Peter, James, and Jude; there are three others closely connected with the fourth Gospel; and above all, the collection bearing the great name of the Apostle Paul, addressed to the churches which he had founded, or was about to visit, or to the friends engaged with him in fellow work. Lastly, there are an anonymous letter to the Hebrews, and a book of visions seen by John.

On the most cursory view it is plain that we do not witness here the rise and vicissitudes of a nation; we are at the birth of a faith, at the cradle of a church. We have not the remains of an old literature, but the beginning of a new one. Contemporary or nearly so with some of the works now comprised in our New Testament were other gospels, other letters, other books of apocalyptic glory,

some of which the Christian collections themselves once contained. The preface to the third of our Gospels tells us that many had taken in hand to tell the wondrous story, and of one such Gospel at least—the Gospel according to the Hebrews—considerable passages yet remain. There are letters bearing the names of Clement and Barnabas; we hear of an Apocalypse of Peter; and there is another collection of similitudes and visions known as the Shepherd of Hermas. Do the writers of the New Testament books give us any clue by which their works may be distinguished from compositions such as these? Do they ever speak of themselves as combining to produce an authoritative exposition of the things needful for salvation? By no means. So far were they from contemplating the instruction of the universal Christian Church, that some of their most important productions were addressed to single individuals. Narratives of such significance as the Gospel according to Luke and the Book of Acts were written for the benefit of one Theophilus; and some of the most valuable among the shorter letters ascribed to the Apostle Paul are those to his disciples Timothy and Titus. The occasions of many other books may be determined with tolerable confidence. They were intended to warn believers against errors like those combated in the first letter attributed to John, which have long since passed away; or they were designed, like Paul's correspondence with the Galatians or the Corinthians, for the settlement of disputed questions in a particular church; while a large portion of the letter to the Romans was occupied with a discussion of the relative claims of the

Jews and the Gentiles. These were matters of life and death to the young communities, but their personal application has vanished in the course of centuries; and from amid the intricacies of argument, or the rapid alternations of encouragement and reproof, intended for a particular generation, we have to gather the secrets of the apostolic message for all time.

When, however, these documents are compared together, it becomes apparent that they do not all move on the same lines of thought and feeling. Through the glory of the new hope we discern here and there the shadows of misunderstanding and jealousy, of distrust and opposition. Round the person of Jesus have gathered a number of stories, gradually wrought into shape by pious imagination, in which the words and deeds of the Master appear more or less distorted as they are seen through the medium of an erring memory, an unfounded expectation, a misconception of prophecy, a delusive hope. Under what circumstances the simplest form of the Gospel story took a written shape, we do not know. But the friends and followers of Jesus, as their number began to thin, must have felt the need of recording the impressions still first-hand with themselves. The Master's words were naturally the most precious; and round the recollections of his discourses clustered many a reminiscence of his life. Parable and saying were often linked inseparably in remembrance with the incidents which had called them forth, and so a nucleus was found for the evangelic narratives. But these records could not remain wholly unaffected by the conflicts of a later time. Memory often

shapes itself into the mould set for it by passing events. And so within the lines of Gospel and Epistle may yet be traced the worn-out struggles, the far-off controversies, of the first Christian Church; and there, too, may be found the efforts at harmony which issued in the great movement for unity in the second century.

But it is noteworthy that it was not to these documents that the early teachers appealed. For them the sources of authority lay, not in writings as yet destitute of the canonical sanction afterwards imparted to them by the Church, but in the national Scriptures which had been dear to Jesus himself. It was with the Law and the Prophets in their hands that they went forth to carry their glad tidings to a weary world. Not to their own records, their histories, their correspondence, did they resort for proof of the meaning of their story, but to the books made sacred by long usage, where in almost every page the instructed eye might discern the types and read the predictions of the events now realized. It is not a little significant that the early Church invoked the authority of the Old Testament to confirm the statements of the New: the modern believer reverses this process, and finds in the New Testament the warrant for the authenticity of the Old. Both methods of reasoning cannot possibly be correct; and neither is really adequate as a basis for faith. But it is plain from this inversion of the relation usually supposed to subsist between these two groups of writings, that the authors of the latter had no idea that they were providing all future ages with a sort of heaven-dictated text-book of the scheme of salvation. And for this among other reasons. The last

age was already here. The New Testament opens with the preacher's exhortation, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" It closes with the promise, "*Surely I come quickly.*" But between these in every note of warning and of hope is the great idea repeated that the time is short, the world is passing away, and the end of all things drawing nigh. The Master's own words were thought to signify that he would return in the glories of the sky before the last of his followers should be ready for the grave; and the dead were laid peacefully in their rest with the confidence that soon the herald trumpet would resound, and the occupants of the houses and the tombs be caught up together to meet their Lord. Only little by little did this expectation fade. The world went on upon its usual course. The market and the school, the barrack and the bath, still stood erect. The last of the apostles, and then the last of those who had seen and known the apostles, died. And so it became clear that human things had not exhausted their tenure of the earth, and with the second century came the need of the organization of the Church. The scattered communities of Palestine, of Asia, of Africa, of Greece and Italy and Gaul, were brought into closer relations with each other, as their leaders passed from land to land.

One of the consequences of this doubtless was the communication of the documents embodying the records of their faith. In their public services, books which were known as the *Memoirs of the Apostles* (not, perhaps, actually identical with our Gospels), and letters of the apostles, came to be read together with the ancient Scriptures of the Jews. Beside the Law and the Prophets, two new col-

lections found a place, the Evangelic and the Apostolic. With their combination into one whole came the necessity of a new name. The Hebrews of old had loved to describe their religion as a covenant made between God and their forefathers. The books recording its promises and commands were the books of the covenant. With the teachings of Jesus, it was instinctively felt, began a fresh era. He had come, indeed, "to fulfil," but he had come to do more than could be claimed of him by any past. Yet he had himself designated his religion, too, as a "covenant:" it was a term readily intelligible to his people. It passed into the apostolic teaching, and was naturally adopted by the Church. And so, beside the books of the Old Covenant, were set the books of the New. They were the books which related the first beginnings under Jesus and his followers of the wider faith, the larger hope, the deeper love, which could no longer be confined to the chosen people, but must embrace mankind. By degrees they became known under the Latin name of *Testament*, which replaced in Western Christendom the older Greek term first employed. The Testament, then, in its earliest shape, contained our four Gospels, and possibly the Book of Acts, at least ten of the Epistles of Paul, the first of Peter, and the first of John. But its range was by no means uniform. It varied considerably between Antioch and Carthage, Alexandria and Rome. Among the books now constituting our collection, which were not then universally received, were the Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Apocalypse. The latter is omitted, for instance, in the ancient Syriac version called

the Peshito. On the other hand, a welcome was given to several of the productions of early Christian literature, which have been since eliminated. The very ancient manuscript known as the Alexandrian, preserved in the British Museum, contains a letter from Clement of Rome, and part of a second ascribed to him: and the famous manuscript discovered by Dr. Tischendorf in the convent at the foot of Mount Sinai adds the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas after the Book of Revelation.

It was long ere these different collections were reduced to unity. But the need of protecting the Church from corruption of its teaching, when the rise of successive heresies threatened its purity, called forth the support of ecclesiastical tradition around the books most widely accepted. It is on this, for example, that the four Gospels finally repose, rather than on the analogies of the four winds, the four quarters of the earth, the four elements, the four rivers of Paradise, the four letters of the name Adam, with which Irenæus, Cyprian, Jerome, and others, are pleased to confirm it. When arguments such as these were accepted, it is clear that the books themselves put forth no irresistible claims. The truth is, that the New Testament is the growth of several generations. The materials composing it may perhaps all be brought within a hundred years, instead of the millennium required for the Old. But the second century was well on its way ere the idea of a New Testament was formed at all, and two centuries more rolled on before its limits were decided and its list complete. The great Council of Nicæa, in the year 325 A.D., inserted no article in its creed about

the New Testament, though it did affirm its belief in the Holy Catholic Church. And it was left for the African clergy, at a Council held at Carthage in 397, to fix, perhaps under the influence of Augustine, the limits of the New Testament as they have ever since remained for Western Christendom. Do you, then, tell me that the New Testament is the "Word of God"? I must ask you which among all the New Testaments is it that you mean? Is it the New Testament of Origen or Tertullian? is it that of Syria or Italy? If I accept the New Testament of the East, the Apocalypse must be rejected, and the New Jerusalem, with its streets of gold and gates of pearl, will be dissolved into the air; if I take the New Testament of the West, the Epistle to the Hebrews loses its place, and the doctrine of the mediatorial agency of Jesus as the great high-priest drops out of the scheme of Christian theology. Or do you bid me wait four hundred years after the Teacher and his disciples, and then take the Bible as I find it? Why, if so, it is under the auspices of the Church that you would have me receive my Bible. On the one hand, we are assured that we must believe in the creeds of the Church because they may be proved from the Scriptures. On the other hand, we know that the Scriptures were selected and sanctioned by the Church which produced the creeds. It seems to be thought a matter of indifference to the edifice of faith, whether we begin with the foundations, or at once lay on the roof.

What, then, is the issue of this long recital? If you inquire of the Bible whether it professes to be "written" (as I have heard it said) "by the Holy Spirit," you will ask

in vain. No task is more easy than to pile up instances of its inner contradictions, but no task is so unprofitable for its true understanding. Instead of arguing about its inspiration, consider the facts of its origin and growth. Did it contain any pretensions to be a final authority in matters even of religion, these facts would, I think, suffice to overthrow them. We reject without hesitation the plea of the Hindu that his Vedas are infallible and divine, and if he meets similar assertions about the Bible with a similar denial, I know not with what arguments he can be disarmed. But I cannot find in it any such pretensions, and I will not wrong the Bible by thrusting upon it claims which it does not make and cannot justify. Is it affirmed that "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*," and as such demands our unquestioning allegiance? Even conceding the fullest breadth to the meaning of this statement, it cannot possibly refer to books which did not exist when it was made, and does not by any means cover the whole Bible. And it is further well known that this verse is quite capable of another translation, viz., that "*every God-inspired writing is also profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness*," an assertion which no one need wish to dispute, but which does not tell us what the "God-inspired writings" are.

There is, in short, no escape from the fundamental principle of rationalism. It is not a choice between the Church, the Bible, *and* private judgment. The ascription of final authority to the Church or to the Bible is itself an act of private judgment, which stands before us, not as

an alternative basis of faith, but as the inevitable preliminary of every act of belief. The proposition that the Bible is infallible must be determined in precisely the same way as the truth of the simplest historical fact which any of its pages relates, viz., by its agreement with the evidence. In submitting its statements separately to the examinations of reason, we are doing nothing different from those who seek to establish the validity of its teachings as a whole. The distribution of the inquiry over its details, instead of directing it upon the mass, does not alter the essential character of our dealing with it. It is simply a question of the true method. Those who approach it by the historical method do not ignore its share in the growth of their own personal religion. They know very well that it is in many respects the earliest source, though not the ultimate ground, of their most cherished convictions. They can recall a father's tones as he instructed them in its noblest histories; they never lose from their hearts the memory of a mother's tenderness leading them to pray its sweetest prayers. From the mazes of science they return to learn of its seers the child's heart of wonder and reverence, and say anew, "*the earth is the Lord's and all that is therein;*" "*bless the Lord, all his works;*" from the speculations of philosophy they come back to drink of the higher wisdom of Jesus, "*blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" They find in it the record of struggles and temptations, of conquests and failures, like their own; but they see also a way of deliverance, a source of strength, far higher than their own. They find that every page of its warnings bears

stamped upon it the searching utterance, "*Thou art the man*," awakened to compunction by its appeals, they follow its sinners into the sanctuary of contrition. In their hours of deepest joy they can find no better words of thankfulness than are written in its psalms of praise; in the most secret agonies of doubt or grief they are confirmed by its sufferers in patient trust. Moreover, they know that the Bible is something more than a book of personal religion. As they mingle in spirit with the disciples around the Master, or listen to the burning words of the Apostle of the Gentiles, or repose in the mystic light and love of the fourth Gospel, they recognize that they are inseparably linked with the mighty spiritual forces which have thrilled through Christendom to this very hour. They see that if the Old Testament is the history of a faith, the New Testament is the prophecy of a life. Of the first realization of that life it offers us the record, brief, indeed, and fragmentary, but strong and high enough to draw after it the aspiration of every age. To this, all men have delighted to carry back their worthiest efforts: in this, each fresh type has sought its justification. The missionary and the martyr, the monk and the knight, the poet and the painter, the Puritan, the philanthropist, have all found the inspirations of zeal and self-denial, of rapture and beauty, of religious veracity, of love even for the unlovely, within its lines. "*Preach the gospel*," "*take up the cross*," "*blessed are the meek*," "*endure hardness*," "*God is a Spirit*," "*the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost*,"—have we not in such utterances the sources of the manifold lines of Christian character? Century after cen-

tury has one of these mighty notes rung out over a disordered world, and the hearts of men have yielded to it, and one or another of the harsh discords has been blended into a new harmony. Nor is the great symphony played out. Our crowded busy life to-day still thrills with its tones; nay, they are sweeter than ever amid the clash of conflict, and their deep significance is better understood. The jealousies of churches are abating. The war of theologies subsides. Controversies, once eagerly pursued with strife of texts, have been silenced for ever. The Bible, in every pulpit, in every home, serves as an outward symbol of the spiritual unity of Christendom. Its science, indeed, has been laid aside; the telescope has seen beyond the limits of its cosmos; the physiologist has disposed of its theories of possession. The beginnings of its history have been re-written; Eden has become a cave-dwelling; the fall is turned into the rise of man; the curse of toil is translated into the blessing of civilization. But its heaven of inward peace has not vanished with the melting of the firmament into space; the soul is still conscious of sorrow and joy, of victory and defeat, beneath the Divine eye, though the evil spirits have been for ever put to flight. Herein is the true secret of the authority of the Bible. It rests upon the collective witness to its loftiest teachings supplied by the mighty multitudes who have found in it their comfort and strength. To this, each generation adds fresh weight, and age after age a richer experience gathers round its deepest words. Nor will our own time withhold its testimony; for the unseen things for which the Bible stands, and of which it is the supreme

expression—truth and righteousness, faith, hope, love—these still abide: they are the language of something more even than the great heart of humanity: they are the echoes in our poor words, all too weak for the burden of meaning they must bear, of the unchanging thoughts and purposes of God.

VIII.

The Religious Life.

By T. W. FRECKELTON.

I HAVE undertaken to speak of "the Religious Life," of the positive and affirmative aspects of it, as we see them, who professedly consider the first and surest justification of all religious doctrines to be, that they are amenable to Reason, and consonant with the laws of Mind and the order of Nature.

In a religious fraternity like our own, where the bond of union is not dogmatic or ecclesiastical, but one of free intellectual method and spiritual sympathy, and so, outwardly, of the loosest construction, no one man can speak authoritatively for the rest; and I must therefore be considered as speaking for myself; but my topic being one which springs rather out of the fundamental and universal unisons of religious experience and sympathy, than out of the protean forms of religious opinion or expression, I feel confident that I shall not speak for myself alone, but shall carry with me the concurrence of many thousands of holy men and women who are not afraid to prove all

things, and retain only that which is good. Indeed, if this were not so, I should have no place here to-day in a course of lectures under the auspices of the "British and Foreign Unitarian Association," the purpose of which is to affirm "the positive aspects of" what is known as "Unitarian faith and doctrine." And so, though I can make no pretence to speak with authority, I may claim, I hope without presumption, to speak with that higher and surer warrant of a felt agreement with a large body of religious people, whose fraternal sympathies are more profound than can be expressed in any set of inclusive propositions, and wider and deeper than can be affected by all the boundaries of the sects and churches.

My purpose is not controversial or philosophical in any metaphysical sense, but rather declarative, and the bearing of a testimony, as it respects those who wish to understand us; and, as it respects ourselves, to fix our attention upon the facts of the case and their practical issues; that our thoughts becoming more self-conscious in seeking expression, may favour that earnestness and harmony of spirit which intensify character, by allowing ideas to crystallize into conviction, purpose and conduct, and so our lives may bear testimony for our faith by standing clearly out in the lights of duty and privilege, and proclaiming unmistakably whose children we are.

The "Religious Life" presupposes God, ground and cause of all; Soul, the essential inward life of man; Religion, the passion and strife of the soul after God; and Religious Faculty, the capability of man's nature for religion and its end. With the first of these, God, my subject

does not further concern itself than to take Him for granted, and rest all upon Him as the ultimate fact. Of Religion, I shall have much to say, incidentally, all through my lecture, and need only now repeat and insist upon the definition I just now gave, that it is "the passion and strife of the soul after God." Of Soul, more marked notice will have to be taken; and of the Religious Faculty, we shall, at the outset, have to get as clear a conception as possible; and so our topic of "the Religious Life" will appear for our consideration upon its own natural bases and in its right relations.

First of all, then, of the Religious Faculty, by which is meant, not some special power, function, or correlation of the mind with which a man can be religious, as he can think with his intellect, or feel with his emotions, or choose with his will; but rather the capability of his whole nature for religion, for the pursuit of truth, and for consecration to righteousness. This capability for religion, common to man in all ages, is found with different intensity at different times and in different individuals. At one time the tide ebbs into insensibility and indifference; at another, it flows into crises of religious intensity and epoch-making power. In one man it is a "genius and an abandonment;" in another, a mere rudimentary instinct; and between these there is every shade of gradation. These differences depend upon causes we can trace but very obscurely as yet, and take their ethical value, not from themselves, but from the good men make out of them, under the responsibility they impose of use, exercise, and culture. The ground of this faculty, and of all others not purely physical,

is Soul; that personal "something" upon which all our inward life is based, but which yet transcends the senses and the physiological functions of the body, and which religious men have, almost universally, thought capable of maintaining self-conscious existence beyond the limits of this mortal life. I refer to this now, not to argue about it—for here we have no serious disagreement with other religious people—but to show that I recognize it as that in which religious life inheres, and so as lying at the root of my subject; and to make this observation, that to the man who asks that this shall be proved, proof is simply impossible; while to him who intelligently and reverently holds it, or rather feels it to be a necessary deduction from his self-conscious existence, it is so incontrovertible, that to question it or to argue for it seems equally absurd. Whether such a conception of Soul represents a reality is, however, a question which every thoughtful man has to face at one time or other; while they who most believe in it can only state very vaguely the grounds upon which their own intellectual and spiritual satisfaction rests. I may know that I am indeed a living soul, with a knowledge far more real, because rooted far deeper in my consciousness, than any perception I have of physical phenomena; but I am utterly powerless to impart this knowledge to a man who has it not for himself in relation to his own personality. No light is thrown upon the question of Soul by seeking either to establish or ignore any conceivable distinctions between spirit and matter. Of spirit we know nothing but what our own self-consciousness suggests; and of matter, as yet, we know too little to dogmatize

about it. Where it begins or ends, what it is in its essence, of what in itself and in its subtlest combinations it may or may not be capable, we cannot tell. Less still is there any help in the common theological definitions of spirit, which generally move in a vicious circle of negations, trying always to show what it is not, never succeeding in showing what it is. Let us not, however, despair; the light will come some day, when our eyes are clear and strong enough to see it. Meanwhile it is suggestive to see how the physiologists and the new school of psychologists are trying to reduce all spirit to the conditions of matter, and to describe it in the terms of matter; while the physicists and the mathematicians are pushing the conception of matter right out into the realm of spirit, and describing it in the terms hitherto reserved for a spiritual philosophy. Let these fight out the battle and settle the question between them if they can. We shall welcome the truth when it becomes manifest, be it what it may; and we await the result, sure that it will reveal a higher hope and unfold a fuller life than move the heart of the world to-day. For the present it is enough for us that, whatever may be the essential distinctions, if there are such, between spirit and matter, soul and body, there are practical distinctions which are sufficiently clear for our guidance in trying to be good, and practical limits which cannot be safely transgressed.

We know what Materialism is in its lowest interpretation and its grossest applications; it means that soul is not, except as a dream of human vanity, and says, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." It realizes itself

in unmitigated selfishness and reckless uncleanness. Its rule of conduct is, "Each one for himself, and the devil take the hindmost;" only, as there is no devil, except poverty and failure, it is better to put it, "There is no right but might; let the weak go to the wall, or down under foot into the mire." We know what Religion means, based upon Soul and a spiritual philosophy, and soaring free above all unreasoning superstition. It means the whole nature of man taking hold upon God; loving Him utterly; keeping His laws; and, inspired with immortal hope, following on ever along the path of high culture, after perfect character, absolute truth and goodness, and immortal life; and its law of conduct is, to work righteousness, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

It might be objected, "But why take in this way the extreme forms of the logical issues of Materialism and Religion in opposite directions, for the purpose of giving the impression of strong contrast, when it is none the less easy to reverse the process, and show that Religion often passes downwards into degraded and degenerated forms, while Materialism rises up into elevated planes of ethics, if not into religion itself?" The answer is, that it is of the very nature of our minds to rank religion as higher, and every form of materialist conception as lower, in the scale of estimated value; and religion, both as a conception of the mind and as a guide of practical conduct, appeals to lofty elements of our nature, which materialism, in its best forms, never approaches, hardly even recognizes.

When these extreme forms, then, are taken, each of which seems but the practical issue of the first principles

involved in it, the distinctions are sharp and clear enough. He who runs may read them. Now it is for the latter of these ideas we stand; and, however poorly we may realize all involved therein, we affirm that, for us, there are forms of consciousness, thought, feeling, fore-reaching hope, and aspiring, which cannot be accounted for, interpreted or exhausted by so much "molecular motion of the grey matter of the brain," or so much "phosphorus in combination," or so much "accumulated hereditary influence," or "survival of the fittest," or any other strictly material hypothesis. Love for God, and the passion of the soul for rest in Him; aspiration after righteousness; restlessness in the pursuit of truth and goodness; quenchless thirst after knowledge; the hunger of the heart for love; the voluntary self-renunciation for human service; the courageous martyr-spirit which will go on to duty though death stand in the way; and that thankful, peaceful worship of whatever is deepest in us, when after battle and victory over self and circumstance we enter into rest,—these, and a thousand other things, can be only understood at all upon the hypothesis that "there is a spirit in man which giveth him understanding," and that there enters into his being the elements of a larger life, out of the Infinity which is God,—that he is, in fact, a son of God. I know what can be said about "hereditary tendency" and "the cumulative result of long ancestral habit," by way of accounting for the profoundest facts of our inward life; but even if all this and much more were true, so that what we call Soul first came into self-conscious existence thus and is so propagated, that would not alter the fact of what is, or

make it in itself less grand or effective, nor dispense with God as eternal Origin and Cause. The fact of what we are, is of far more importance than the method by which God has made us so. However it came, I mean by Soul that quick energy in us out of which alone all true and permanent things in our life can come; that "something" in us which consciously looks out upon and is in contact with the Infinite; and which, whenever free play is given to it, "feels after God," and rests not until it finds Him. It is the latent possibility of all this which separates man from all the lower animals by a distinction far more sharp and practical than any merely organic or functional difference, and which declares itself in the constant experience of life, in terms far more simple, concise, and unquestionable, than can be expressed by any scientific, theological, or philosophical definitions. This, then, is what I mean by Soul; and bear in mind that I am rather contending for the fact than defining it,—rather looking at it in the light of consciousness, common sense, and common experience, than attempting to describe philosophically what it is. There is a sense in which, for convenience of thought and analytical description, the soul may be considered as complex, or many-sided, and separated—after the manner of metaphysicians—into departmental activities or faculties, each of which may be looked at apart, as having a life of its own: thus we speak of the "intellectual life," the "moral life," the "emotional life," the "spiritual life;" but we must not let the necessities of observation, due to our being able to focus our mental vision only upon one thing at a time, mislead us into the idea that the soul is

really so segregated, and a congeries of separate powers. It is probably far more philosophical and precise to regard the soul as unity and indivisibility, and all these powers but as correlations of it, in our thought, into various forms, and their life as its right activity seen under different aspects. A reasonably cultured mind, introspectively watching the movements of its own self-consciousness, cannot but feel, where the process is clear enough for judgment, that the soul acts as one, as consciousness is one; and that intellectual, moral, emotional, and spiritual processes each involve all the rest; so that what we mean by the "Religious Life" is the life of a Religious Soul, a spiritual vitality of being which runs along every line of its activity, puts duty into every link of its relations, and trembles through every fibre of its influence. It is the highest and finest activity of this Soul which we are, not which we have; for my soul is not mine, it is Me; it is, I repeat, the highest and finest activity of this Soul which we are, facing the Infinite, in contact with God, and taking by virtue of our own will the supreme control of all our responsible existence, which we call the Religious Life; and it is the actual realization of this life which differentiates one man from another in the world far more clearly, for all noble human purposes, than any distinctions of race, colour, creed, social condition, intellectual capacity, or culture.

There are many distinctions difficult to make in words, which, when we see them embodied in facts or lives, are so startlingly clear as to be beyond question. Such is the difference between a really living man and one who but

vegetates or animalizes, and for all high purposes is dead while he lives. This is not a theological but a real distinction, that practically makes all the difference between a good man and a bad, between a wise man and a fool. We speak often of a higher and a lower nature of man, as in some respects in contrast with each other, though not incapable of a true harmony, making each the stronger for the other; but capable also of a very wide divergence, and of such opposition as wastes power and wrecks life. We may not be able to separate them by a line, but practically the working areas are distinct enough; and we are so made that we cannot help ranking things according to an ethical standard of value which is beyond our own direct control. In such a classification, we place in the lower nature all the instincts, the animal appetites, the passions, and every impulse of material self-seeking, with every form of selfish motive, whether of the coarser or more refined kind: when these alone, however restrained, refined, and disciplined, determine the objects and aims of life, it never attains to dignity or worth; if they are lawless and degenerated, and yet rule, life is but a fierce decay and a hollow mockery, alike without beauty and hope. The best part of the man is not alive, or at most only dreaming in a restless nightmare sleep. The higher life alone—that is, the life of the higher nature for the ends of duty and character—is true living. When it is in the ascendant, its natural effect is to "let the ape and tiger die," to hold the merely animal in check, and to discipline and consecrate the lower nature by the predominance of those powers which are the real glory of humanity. The

best in the man is then alive, awake, and active. His intelligence, judgment, conscience, and will, are all so involved in living, that it becomes duty and pleasure to cultivate himself, and see that no part of his nature lacks its due aliment, or suffers for need of exercise, or wastes itself in futile conflict, or over-reaches the general good of the whole. He seeks to harmonize himself with the rates of Nature; to lay himself parallel with ethical laws; to give free play to his noblest and divinest ambitions; and discovers that life best fulfils itself in finding his place and his natural relations to the imperativenesses of things, which are the will of God. Such a life is full of purpose and of high, conscientious forecast: nothing is allowed to drift, or to spend itself in false action or useless friction: there is intensity, enthusiasm, passion for progress, a large charity and benevolence, a constant aptitude for self-sacrifice, a straining after righteousness, and, above all, a high trust in God, which is yet the very heart of a resolute self-reliance, and which links all possession, all duty, all service, and all hope, to God, the great central Life and Love of the universe, and to mankind, the common brotherhood.

This religious life, or concentrated, vivid energy of what is best in man, is not some supernatural gift or operation of God in him, or awakened there by some supernatural force or circumstance outside. Its charm, beauty, and power all lie in its eminent and simple naturalness. True, it springs from the spirit of God, as all life does, when once the right conditions are established; and here they are established by choice of the man's own will and the clear seeing of his intelligence. His spirit gladly and

voluntarily answers to the Divine life which broods over all, quickens in all, and is the hidden source out of which all power and beauty unfold themselves. God does all our works in us, working in us to will and to do, by having given us such and such faculties, imposed upon us such and such duties, and made all high things possible to us in the normal exercise of our own nature, according itself to, obeying, and using the conditions with which He has surrounded us. We lose some grasp of the personal element in our religious life when we trace it to special and unnatural conditions. It is not another life which God gives to us, but our common life and common powers lifted by contact with His spirit upon a higher, but still quite human plane;—not another being, but our very own being, moved by the holiest manly impulse towards the noblest human aims; it is all our present nature, no longer acting fitfully, blown into discordance by every passionate wind, but acting upon the lines of our own personality, and wakened into music by the changeless breath of the spirit of God. What religion has to do with chiefly is the personal factor in life, that which takes up the solemn gauge of responsibility, and the earnest glow of enthusiasm for duty. That thus "Me" should be interfused with the spirit and presence of God, should see that the "supreme moral law" is His will, and duty His service, and should go straight towards righteousness, as an arrow to its aim, carrying with it by the necessary laws of spiritual gravitation the whole nature of the man and the whole influence of the life,—this is the gospel of salvation, written between

all the lines of Nature's revelation, in the conscience of man, and in the whole history of spiritual religion.

It is not necessary here to give more than a passing word to those rigid dogmas with which popular and traditional theology settles the whole question of the relations of the soul and of the religious life to each other; as Conversion, Regeneration, New Birth, the work of the Atonement, and the like. They are all based upon figurative passages of Scripture interpreted in the most inflexible spirit of literalism. The salvation of the soul does not depend upon the right understanding of oriental figures of speech, which, whatever they mean, will not bear the tremendous stress of Calvinistic theology, but upon seeing the will of God, and lovingly and faithfully obeying it. There was a time, not so long ago, when it was important and imperative upon us to show cause why these obtrusive and intolerant dogmas could not be accepted; but the necessity for this is no longer so great, as in nearly all churches which are exerting any formative influence upon thought, or have any promise of long continuance, these doctrines have practically passed into abeyance. I need now only remark, that it is a fairly open question whether the Scriptures do teach these dogmas in their common acceptation; and that, if they did, that would not settle anything; for the Bible is not an infallible source of doctrine for all time, but the history of the evolution and progress of the Hebrew faith, and of the birth and early years of Christianity, and its value to us lies in showing us these things, and the continuity of the growth of reli-

gious thought; and in its truth and helpfulness as a record of religious life and experience.

Here I can well anticipate the objection, made in all sincerity and earnestness, "But what becomes of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it not by virtue of his word and work that the religious life first finds entry into the soul of man?" In the analysis of this objection lies its answer. The objection either means that there never was, is not, nor ever can be, any religious life except that which enters into the soul by virtue of the historical Jesus Christ, or it means that Jesus Christ and his spiritual influence are super-historical facts large enough to cover all ages, religions, and races of men. The former supposition would deny religion to pre-Christian and non-Christian times and people, the Jews among the rest; and the latter would practically confound Jesus Christ with the Spirit of God, which from the first, and everywhere, strives with and enlightens men's souls; thus reducing the historical Jesus Christ to a mere lay-figure in relation to the religious life. But the answer may be made fuller and simpler than this. Taking the simple and rationally defensible position that Jesus Christ was human, and in no sense or degree transcended that which is possible to our common humanity—a position which I must now be content to assume, as any attempt to prove it does not come within my province—there follows naturally from it this corollary: that his power upon the religious life of men is confined to his own and subsequent times, and to those persons only with whom his word and influence come into some form of direct contact. And this is entirely consistent with the

facts of the case, and leaves him to be dealt with upon his own merits as a religious reformer and teacher of inspiring and impelling truths which have moulded men into better life wherever they have been accepted; and in proportion as those truths demonstrate themselves to be fundamental and universal, in that proportion will his influence be world-wide, imperishable, and not to be superseded by the word of any other. But it must be borne in mind that, in itself, the Religious Life is not so much truth, or so much idea, or even so much goodness; it is the right direction, strain, aim, of the very life of the soul, which produces harmonious action, goodness, character, as result and fruit; and in whatsoever nation, and at whatsoever time, men fear God and work righteousness, they are accepted of Him. The souls of men answer to many impulses, and find arousing prophetic voices in many things. God's "wind bloweth where it listeth;" "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Whoever and whatever so moves the soul as to waken in it divine ambition, and a beautiful, hopeful ideal that kindles the emotions, energizes the will, cleanses and consecrates the life, does all that is necessary, not to introduce the Religious Life into the soul, but to bring it to the birth there, under the influence of the ever-brooding Spirit of God. Hence God has never left men without a prophet, or some prophetic ideal that forebodes a larger, fuller, more perfect life. When such an ideal has been an ideal only, in the realms of imagination, or but a poorest compromise with perfection in some prophet-life too weak for such a burden, how even then it has stirred men's souls, lifting them into heroism and sainthood!

How it has changed the currents of history! How it has moved the world, and created new ages of faith out of the dead and decaying past! The grandeur of Jesus and the supremacy of his spiritual influence over men's souls lie just in this, that, as no other did, to theory he added practice; that to truth he added life; that with his gift of light he gave himself; and that he seized at once upon the fundamental and universal in spiritual truth, and upon the fundamental and universal in the spiritual nature of man. So it was that he became "mighty to save," "the first-born among many brethren," and for all these ages, and, for the most part, speaking only out of that thick cloud of superstition that came so long ago and received him out of our sight, he has been, and is, the Teacher whose power to awaken the master-impulses of the soul can be paralleled by no other. We recognize this with glad praise to God and high reverence for Jesus; but we are glad also that he is not the only possible saviour, nor his personal touch the only one that can waken men out of the death of sin into the life of God.

The advantage which I think we may claim for our method of religious thinking in this connection is, that, putting the popular conception of the supernatural aside, it leaves the Religious Life free to the order of Nature, to the living influence of the Spirit of God, and to all the natural, healthy developments of the soul. To us it seems a grave disadvantage that the Religious Life should be predestined to run only between the borders of some theological lines; or to be bound within the covers of some particular book; or to keep within the circle of some

creed; or to be subject always to restraint and limitation from some authority outside itself, as of church or ritual. Like all other life, it should be its own law, impose its own conditions, and take its own course. Only in this way can it escape being narrow, conventional, localized, provincial. Surely, if it be indeed "the life of God" germinating "in the soul of man," it should be large and generous, willing to learn from all sources, to be set in all lights, to be tested by all methods. It should gather all our activities within the circle of its consecration, and should seek enlargement and clearance by all legitimate developments of knowledge; having no dread of Science, no suspicion of Philosophy, no scorn or neglect of Poetry or Art, no repulsion from Politics or profound questions of social Progress, but ready and eager to bring to bear upon them all the purifying, reconciling effect of its own higher law, and ready to consecrate their best results by the highest sanctions, and to use them in the holiest service. It is not smaller than our common life, leaving many things uncared for and unilluminated by its holy light, but larger, deeper, more universal than our common life can ever be, and permeating all, redeeming all, glorifying all.

A man so possessed and moved is a really living man, and his strength and beauty are in this, that he has "life in himself." He can think for himself, judge for himself, act for himself, and, if need be, stand alone against the world. Into his life there are gathered all the elements of beauty; a fine rhythmic fitness of relation, of congruity and balance, of order and continuity, that make it like a harmonious landscape, or a grand poem, or a piece of

"perfect music set to noble words." Everything is in its right place. The Senses are all used, and enjoyed in the using, because they are used, not for themselves, but "as fine steps, down which the queenly Soul descends to view the earth which is her inheritance." The Soul is always in the ascendant. Thought, feeling, sympathy, high spiritual perception, are all on the alert for whatever the daily providence of God may bring. Even the common Instincts and Appetites, by the perfect control in which they are kept, and the solemn sense of duty with which they are consecrated, add a tender human grace to the whole. To a man so self-contained and observant, Nature is always eloquent and suggestive; each thing has some lesson, each circumstance some gift. The Soul sees what is highest in itself reflected everywhere, and ministered to always by the perpetual providence of God. The religious soul is emphatically the open soul, an image in little of the "city of God, the New Jerusalem, descended from God out of heaven," with ever-open gates toward every point of the compass. It is eminently receptive and eclectic, gathering, in a free spirit, the inspiration and materials for its culture from all things. Its Revelation is in the open face of Nature, in the Bible and all other sacred books, and in whatsoever literature, of any time or land, that has spiritual help and significance as records of the religious growth and experience of men. Its Devotion is in the ritual of the ages, as the historic expression of dependence upon and communion with the Supreme. Its Worship is in the never-ceasing song of praise that through the generations follows the daylight round the world, and makes musical

the watches of the night. Using all, but bound by none, to each of these it adds its own last word and touch of personal revelation, which relates it to all the present, and by which it helps to shape the future. So the Religious Life is the key to Nature, to Revelation, to History, to Experience, and the key also to the right use of these for personal ends. Life is a daily feast, at which God ever keeps the good wine until now. Every true aspiration is met, every true desire anticipated, every healthy want satisfied. Life is a daily school, where every weakness is disciplined, every strength encouraged, justified, and at length employed, and where the limitations of knowledge and experience are constantly corrected and enlarged. Life is a daily worship, tremulous with reverence, beautiful with prayer and song, and fragrant with the incense-perfume of holy thoughts and good deeds. So do Nature and Providence lean down lovingly into the good man's life, mingling earth with heaven; linking it all with God; moving it all to the orderly music of His great purpose; and yet giving to it all a self-sufficiency and equipoise which reveal how grand the human will can be when it chooses only righteousness, rests only on God, and follows always the natural laws of the progress of the soul. I do not say that this life gives always happiness, or promises it in present conditions—for on the earth there are as many nights as days, and the days are rare when the sky has no least fleck of cloud—but it is always blessedness, and gives blessing, because it is natural, healthy, and progressive.

This, then, as well as I can describe it, is the Religious

Life. It is no spectral vision called from the "vasty deep" of theological speculation; no artificial, galvanized automaton, stuffed with the mechanical clock-work of creeds and systems, which cannot be human for over-much imaginary divinity, or natural, lest it should discredit its supposed supernatural origin; but a life which possesses the man, and which works from his central heart to the extremest bounds of his influence. You say, "Where shall we find such a life? Who in these days is living just so?" Well, perhaps not you or I; but still the earth is God's, and has some beautiful things to show. There are Saints even now and here, trailing their spotless robes over the asphodels of the garden of God. Blessed are the eyes that know them! but, alas for us! for the most part we recognize them only "as their white wings go lessening up the skies." When we look each at himself, we are so conscious of defect that we cannot, for very shame, sit in judgment upon our fellows. But when we are thinking upon such a subject as now engages us, it is well to rise above ourselves. The standard of what we are would be too misleading and unjust. We must try to grasp great principles and get some vision of high ideals; to compare ourselves with absolute standards as far as we know them; and ask ourselves, not so much what we are, as what is possible to us, and to what heights others have attained. What is all our restless discontent but the sense that the lower life is unsatisfactory and insufficient, is "nothing to the measure of our mind"! What is the constant friction of our experience, as ill-co-ordinated powers grate harshly upon each other, but evidence that all is not right within! What are

these aspirings after God, these longings after inner righteousness, this impatience with our own failures, and alternations of spiritual power, but reminders that we are capable of better things! And the saints of God that beautify and glorify every age, and, even in the world's fiercest fire, have no smell of it passed upon their garments, that even now, thank God! are not so few, not so far apart, but that they sometimes grasp our hands, live in our homes, lie in our bosoms—they are the witnesses of God's love that such a life is possible also to us. They are the earnest of our victory, and the very soul of our encouragement and hope, for are they not "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh"? The secret of all is, that our aims should be noble and our tendencies right; that we should be, in fact, really alive; quickened by the all-surrounding, all-inspiring breath of God; and that our life should be vigorous; not like a smouldering fire, with much ado to live; nor like some poor, wilted, plant-life, needing constant shelter and protection; or some hot-house, forced thing, shrinking from the "nipping and eager air" of practical duties and cares; but life with the soul of a strong purpose in it, governed by an indomitable will, and freshened with a healthy love of daylight and the free air; a life in which the whole nature is on the eager strain after whatever is beautiful, true, or good; out-reaching and on-looking; receiving ever, bestowing ever; always hoping, always aspiring, always blest, but never satisfied; never saying, even to God, "It is enough!" If our aim and direction be right, everything is possible to us; for "against these things there is no law" in nature or in human nature,

nor can we see any limit, nor even conceive of any. We are upon lines which, to our vision, seem continuous into infinity. We need not haste; we must not rest; nor, whatever our attitude, dream of finality for ourselves or others. Say not you,

> "Man's measured path is all gone o'er;
> Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh
> Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
> Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
> "Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
> Unto the furthest flood-brim, look with me;
> Then reach on with thy thought till it be drowned.
> Miles and miles distant though the grey line be,
> And, though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,
> Still leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea."

> "There is a fire-fly in the southern clime
> Which shineth only when upon the wing.
> So it is with mind. If once we rest, we darken.
> 'On!' said God unto the soul, as to the earth, 'for ever!'
> And on it goes; a rejoicing nature of the Infinite,
> As is a bird of air, an orb of heaven!"

Ah! shame on us, how poorly we live! How we lay our noblest ambitions in the dust! How we forsake our ideal, or drag it, like a disgraced fetish, at the heels of our selfishness in the mire of the street! And all the time such a religious life as I have described—nay, far, far beyond any poor description of mine—is within our reach; and yet we call ourselves by his name "in whom was life, and the life was the light of men"!

I must not leave it possible for you to suppose that the Religious Life completes itself in being just what I have described. I have spoken of harmony, culture, personal

activity, desire for inner righteousness, and communion with God, touching only incidentally the practical side of these things and the way they affect our relations to others; but however great and beautiful the things may be which issue in personal religion and sustain it in the soul, taken alone they cannot escape the flavour and charge of selfishness. Religion is not simply a high and refined way of caring for self. We know this well when we pause to think; but we are all tempted at times to make a luxury of our religion, or rather, alas! of the religion of our fathers, now with God, some after-glow of which we have inherited. We settle down and live upon it, like so much realized property, and, looking upon it as ours, imagine that we have a right to do as we like with our own, and so proceed to arrange an artistic scheme of life, in which looking after our own souls or caring for our special church takes the place of serving God and man. This is not worthy of us. Our light must not be for ourselves alone, or for any select coterie to which we belong. We must not hide our candle under a bushel; it is not permissible, even though the bushel cost twenty thousand pounds, and be designed in the daintiest style of Victorian Gothic architecture, and have a steeple and a chancel. What is the value of our cultured and refined "house of life" or temple of worship, if we sit serenely in it, amid all the voices of truth, the wealth of nature, the providence of God, the favour of opportunity; receiving, absorbing, enjoying, but bestowing nought, teaching none, helping none, doing nothing; very pious, devout, and exemplary, but living in a fool's paradise of sentimental

religious delights, select and apart from the common interests and the general happiness of men! Say to your soul, "Soul! thou hast much goods laid up for many years; enlarge thy storehouse; eat, drink, and be merry;" and, while religion is sweet in thy mouth, God shall pronounce thee "fool!" Boast of the great Babylon thou hast builded; and while thy heart is lifted up with pride, the sentence is gone forth which dooms thee to eat grass like a beast, and be wetted with the dews of heaven, until God's "seven times" have passed over thee, and taught thee who it is that rules in heaven and earth. If you would see the doom of such barren spiritual pride, read and ponder well Tennyson's "Palace of Art," the picture of a beautiful and highly-gifted soul becoming smitten with the leprosy of selfishness, because it lacked the gracious salt of consecrated use for the service of others.

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;
I said, 'O soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul! for all is well.'"

"'And while the world runs round,' I said,
'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring.'
To which my soul made answer readily:
'Trust me; in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion that is built for me,
So royal, rich, and wide.'"

"And so she throve and prospered; so three years
She prospered: on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
Struck through with pangs of hell.

"Lest she should fall and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of personality,
Plagued her with sore despair."

"She howled aloud, 'I am on fire within;
There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die?'"

The true standard of the value of a life is its worth to the world. Its dignity is to be measured by its service to man. "By their fruits shall ye know them," said Jesus; and that tree which with plentiful leaves bears no fruit is but a cumberer of the ground.

I have no wish to be censorious or severe. It is fatally easy to be hard upon the sins of others and forget our own. But custom, fashion, conventionalism, are great tyrants—good, in their way, when we use them as servants, but bad when they rule us as slaves, and worst of all when they dominate the religious life; they take the youth out of its heart; they freeze charity in its bosom; they banish the smiles from its face, and leave it hollow, unsympathetic, and haggard. Would you be religious in a grand human way, worthy of your nature and of the best traditions of human heroism, then remember that

"Thyself and thy belongings
Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do;
Not light them for themselves: for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touched
But to fine issues: nor Nature never lends
The smallest scruple of her excellence,

But, like a thrifty goddess, she determines
Herself the glory of a creditor,
Both thanks and use."

So all we have we hold in trust from God our Father for man our brother. Your strength is for the weak, your light for those who sit in darkness, your joy for the sorrowful, your knowledge for the ignorant, your wisdom for the guidance of the erring. "Ye are not your own," but bought with the price of all the labour and self-sacrifice of those who have gone before, from the dawn of history to Christ on the cross, and from him to the last nameless toiler of to-day. God has set you also in the line of history and in the continuity of progress. Not for nothing has He made you beautiful, talented, good, true, wise, strong, holy, or influential. Not for nothing has He touched you, soul or body, with the least finger-touch of the chrism of His anointing, but that you may serve Him in serving those whose need comes nearest to what is helpful in you. And He has made every good deed to have its reward in itself.

This, indeed, is truly to live! Is it nothing to "walk this world yoked in all noble ends, and so through those dark gates across the wild which no man knows"? Is it nothing to live gracious and worthful lives in the world; here amongst men as the salt of the earth; as the light of the world; as an embodied comfort amidst its many sorrows; a living rebuke of sin; a constant check upon evil; a leader of the blind; a seeker of the lost; a comfort of the despairing; a saviour of sinners? "Ah!" you say, "this and more was all true of Jesus the Master.

at whose saintly feet we sit to-day rebuked and ashamed; but we! who are we?" O slow of heart and faithless! Are not you also "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty"? Ask the Master, even him, for the secret of his life, and he will tell you, "I work the works of my Father who sent me, and the works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father." As with him, so with you; your life and strength are in God. Wait on Him, and you shall renew your strength. Rest in Him, and He shall give you your heart's desire. Be manly, true, faithful, reverent. Serve your own generation according to God's will. He will never leave you nor forsake you; "He is not dead that He should speak no more;" and on all the way you shall be guided by no less voice than His, which shall speak to you out of the light and the darkness alike. He is "nearer to you than your breathing, closer than hands and feet;" you shall be led by no less hand than His, which shall beckon you when you are strong, and support you when you are weak; and when you are very weary, and flesh and heart alike fail you, He will carry you for a little while in His bosom, and give you comfort and rest. And at last, when work and waiting both are done, and He shall call you to—ah! who shall tell us where?—to be —ah! who shall tell us what?—why then, indeed, all will be well. We can say no more where we know nothing, only that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into man's heart to conceive, what God hath prepared for those who love Him."

Bear yet with one concluding word. What I have said

may possibly have awakened two thoughts in your minds to which I would fain respond. You may have felt that my treatment of this question has been rather that of a sermon than a lecture, fitted rather for the church than a place of ordinary public assembly. I see not how I could have avoided this, for I have had to speak chiefly of that which is the inspiration of every sermon that is worth the name. This is of little consequence if your hearts have been moved to self-scrutiny and high resolve. And if I have been so happy as to teach you anything, to throw some beam of light athwart the perplexities of duty and the deep over-shadowed meanings of life; or to voice for you your own half-conscious thoughts and yearnings after better things; or, with however poor a fitness, to have declared and made clear the outlines, as we see them, of that "city of God which is humanity," though seen as yet but in an ideal glory,—that is well; and I may hope not to have entirely failed in that which I set out to do, which was to show that out of a most rational conception of Humanity, of Providence, and of Religion, a most consecrated, beautiful, and saintly Religious Life may grow—nay, is imperatively demanded by that rational conception itself. And if you feel that this Religious Life which I have sketched as naturally growing out of rationalistic conceptions of religion, and imperatively demanded by them, is nothing new, but presents to you familiar outlines and aspects, and, notwithstanding certain modern and individual shades and tints, is in the main the very thing for which the best teachers of all sects are contending, and towards which the best men of all religions are striv-

ing—so that there is nothing here, excepting merely local touches, that is special to us or to our form of thought—I know it, and glory in it, and thank God for it. The same end may be reached by many ways, some winding, others direct. God saves men, not in the mass, but singly, soul by soul, and "every man in his own order." I do not care to contend that this end of a Religious Life cannot be reached by another man's way, by a thousand ways, in which I cannot walk; I only contend that by the way in which we walk it can be reached, and that for me and thousands more it is the simplest and only way. We will walk in it, will maintain it, will invite other feet into its broad and simple path, through green pastures, by still waters, careful "to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;" and we ask only, not of Christian charity, but of simple justice and righteousness, that our claim shall be admitted when we seek for recognition in the fellowship of the universal Church and in the communion of saints. We stand consciously and thankfully in the acceptance of God and in communion with Him, and are unwilling to be denied the brotherhood of the faithful and striving everywhere; "for by one spirit we have all been baptized into one body, and have all been made to drink into one spirit."

IX.

The Church.

By HENRY IERSON, M.A.

I would fain believe that the ideal of the Christian Church which I am about to present is a conception not unfamiliar to many thoughtful persons of various denominations. In offering to public attention certain positive views of religious truth as it presents itself to Unitarians, we have not stopped to consider whether such views are peculiar to ourselves. We have rather desired to show how much agreement subsists among all the religious bodies, than to dwell upon points of difference; and we would gladly be told that little of what has been advanced may be claimed specially as our own. Indeed, we are thankful to believe that we have expressed what is, to a large extent, the thought of the time. In books of many kinds, in religious and other periodicals, even in the daily papers, and hardly to a less extent in published sermons and addresses proceeding from all quarters of the Christian world, are constantly to be found statements of theological opinion so closely resembling what have long

been regarded as Unitarian heresies, that some of us have been tempted to think that our work was done, that the liberal protest of our churches was no longer needed, and that the time was rapidly approaching for the re-union of all Christians on the broad principles of religion which we have endeavoured to set forth.

It will be something gained to Christian unity if we have succeeded in showing that the utmost freedom of thought involves no detriment to religious feeling; that the mind's independence is not necessarily sacrificed when it leads men to bow reverently in the temple of Christian worship, to accept obediently the Christian law of the conscience, and to recognize in the spirit of Christ the vital element of all true brotherhood of men.

It would seem that from various causes the Unitarian churches do not receive at present the large accessions of strength that might naturally have been looked for from the more general acceptance of our principles, of our modes of thought, and even of our doctrines,—a matter of regret, as we think, not as it affects ourselves, but in justice to truth, which gains little from a half-hearted and compromising support. Nevertheless, we watch with delight the rising tide of intellectual progress which has set so strongly in the liberal direction in the various currents of scientific knowledge; in the enlarging study of nature, of man, of comparative religions, of Biblical criticism, and of the history of opinions. We rejoice to discern the Divine hand in the great upheaval and overturn and re-settling of thought, like as in new geologic forms, which is at this moment proceeding, and would endeavour gratefully to

learn the new duties of our own position in this immense revolution of religious belief. We would at least strive to make more clear to men what we have always felt, that the granite rock of religious conviction and humane sentiment is secure beneath all superficial changes; that on that rock the true Church has always rested, whatever it may have otherwise thought; and that it has reflected the mind of Christ from his time till now just in the proportion in which this sentiment—this conviction, has been more or less consciously present in it.

Many efforts have been made in recent years to bring together the scattered members of Christ in one visible communion. Why have they so sadly failed? There is little in common between his grand conception of the kingdom of God and the pettiness of ecclesiastical systems. We must go behind all these to hear the Word of his Spirit, to which our own time also would gladly listen, were it uttered through a body in clearer harmony with itself in all its members. Why is it taken for granted that the churches must continue in mutual antagonism? The difficulty does not arise from mere local separation, even where this may have originated from divergences of opinion. There are important differences as to doctrines and forms of worship which, so long as they continue, fully justify the subsistence of distinct congregations. There is no valid objection to this diversity; and I think the combination of a public form of worship with a certain definite teaching of truth, as each church in the main apprehends it, is, if not a happy thing, considering the variety in which God manifestly delights in nature, at least a necessity which

cannot be avoided. But the separate churches *can* guard against sectarianism. They cease to be Christian when they become sectarian. They *can* avoid mutual bitterness, mutual mistrust and misunderstandings, mutual contempt and denunciation.

Let them learn the lesson which the more enlightened public opinion of our time might surely teach them. Though ecclesiastical questions are intensely interesting to those at all concerned about them, there are no subjects with regard to which the modern public mind is more impatient. The churches have assumed, as if with infallible authority, that only through certain opinions which they hold can any person become evangelical and Christian; but men see that they admit no common standard of appeal, and that therefore, while every point in debate is full of difficulties and mystery, no certain issue can be arrived at, while at the same time the moral sense of the community is offended at the cold inhumanity of their mutual anathemas. Their fundamental error has been the parcelling out of truth into articles of orthodox profession, setting intellectual boundary-lines of spiritual safety. With Christ the rule was, "He that doeth the will of God," and the church can hardly be in harmony with the spirit of Christ which does not honour purity and goodness above the most submissive correctness of creed.

Efforts have not been wanting, in this view, to demonstrate that the true communion of the Christian Church rests on common sympathies of character, not on the profession of identical opinions; that it is properly a

fellowship of spirit and moral purpose, capable of holding together by the bond of kindred desires and aspirations after the perfect life. It is felt that the church on earth should not have its entrance narrower than the gate of acceptance with God; should not shut out good men who will certainly find their way, in the grace of God, direct to heaven. The root of goodness has no exclusive preferences. It springs up, as Jesus said, in the good ground of individual hearts, and it may be found in all the churches, perfectly irrespective of particular creeds.

To this belief, I need hardly say, we firmly adhere. We do not undervalue opinion, but we value truth more, and we know that that is never secure when stereotyped in authoritative forms. The quality of highest value all admit to be the Christian spirit, the true basis of concord in the midst of intellectual divergences. Only on the ground of the higher law of charity and mutual respect can the Christian Church ever again become one. For the more men think, the greater freedom of thought must be allowed. The free intellect tends always to the sundering of any body in which it cannot find full exercise. The heart, not the intellect, is the organ of unity, the true Catholic principle; the warm heart and the earnest will, both characteristic Christian elements, specially tending to union in zealous work for the good of mankind.

It is commonly supposed that Jesus gave definite instructions as to the constitution and laws of the Church, and that therefore there was a primitive model which we have only to study in order to learn what is the one properly authorized form for all churches to the end of time.

It cannot be affirmed, however, that such an appeal to the earliest Christian records will certainly bring all honest thinkers into one fold. There have been divisions created by the simple rule of abiding by Scriptural terms and precedents. Indeed, a new sect is sure to form whenever from some fresh point of view dissatisfaction with established systems leads men to compare, and then obliges them to contrast, these with what is thought to be the authoritative simplicity of the New Testament. And the same result will surely follow whenever the attempt is made with the same idea of finding an infallible form, the one certain channel of saving grace.

I propose to show (1) that Jesus did not give to his disciples a scheme of church constitution and government, but rather (2) certain principles which he desired his followers to carry out. I will ask you then to consider (3) the history of the formation of the Church, and to compare with this (4) what a Church must be if modelled on his principles.

I. The earliest history of the Church, as of most other great institutions, is obscure and uncertain. It had become so even at the time when the first record of it was composed. But even if we could ascertain with certainty what were the primitive forms and practices of the Church, the question would arise whether the reality corresponded with the Master's idea. And since we may find this in his own teaching, it is not necessary to assume, where the contrary is manifest, that the first disciples fully and infallibly apprehended it, and formed the churches on some plan or by a set of precepts which he had himself

supplied. It was certainly not after his manner to lay down determinate rules for all times, all places, all varieties of circumstance; and the example of so simple and obvious a matter as the first election of deacons having been left, according to the Book of Acts, unprovided for, does not encourage the belief that Jesus had ever departed from his usual method of trusting principles to their own free play.

We can well see, indeed, from the earliest Christian writings how numerous and how serious *were* the divisions that sprung up, as to which it would be impossible to think that they could have arisen had Christ left behind him either a fixed creed or a permanently settled church constitution. We can further see how far from the mind of Christ, in the interpretation of his ideal, even Apostolic men could be, who had yet to learn that the Jewish Law could not subsist as an authority side by side with the Gospel, and did not understand, until the nations through Paul's teaching had manifestly entered the kingdom, "every man," as says the Pauline Gospel, "pressing into it," that God is no respecter of persons, that all men were made one in this common discipleship.

The only wise and practical course must be to study, as far as the sources permit, the first crude working out of Christ's idea. We can learn something of what it was by observing what it was early conceived to have been, though probably under some misapprehension; and if we are not compelled to believe that Jesus taught a communistic doctrine because of a certain tradition that the first Christians had all things common, yet may be recognized in

the very mistake of his followers the principle which they did mistake and which he had really taught. It would have been strange had there occurred no misapprehensions of the kind—nay, contrary to the very laws of things, had the ways of thinking natural to the early disciples, had old prejudices and life-long habits and associations of mind exerted no influence on the first Christian views and usages. Great ideas have to be worked out through common elements; the wonder is that they survive the treatment to which they have so often to submit. Christianity had to be brought into the mental world of the Jews and Romans and Greeks of that age, and it could only take effect on the familiar lines of the thought of the time. The ideal of the Church conceived as the one spiritual body of Christ's followers was in fact too simple, too grand for men at first fully to realize; and well might a man like Paul feel that it had been re-inspired in his own mind—"*my* gospel," as he terms it—when he had to maintain its first principles at such heavy cost, knowing all the time that this was the true and deep sense of Christ's teaching, though the earlier disciples had not during many years perceived its natural issues.

How Paul understood the grand ideal is a question of greater importance than any consideration as to what forms were assumed by the earlier churches or Christian synagogues of Judæa, since it was in effect his hand that laid the wider foundations on which Christendom rests to this day, and we have his own writings to show what ideas of the Church were held by the man who first comprehended it in its spiritual and universal character, and did not

regard the kingdom of heaven as a mere reformed and extended Jewish theocracy,—a man of the type of John Wesley, gifted with the power of organizing, of great personal force of character, and one who could by every right take upon himself "the care of all the churches."

But he lets us see the actual processes of church formation under his influence and prevision. A born ruler of men, he trusts much to his own personal influence and example. Like the Master, he will not multiply precepts until the necessity for them appears, and even then he does not make permanent regulations, so much as lays down principles. It is quite sufficient, he thinks, to say, Look at the true end to be kept in view—"let all be done to edifying;" and if he must do more than this, he does it only, as he declares, to preserve order "until Christ should come." Even he had no design of building up the Church in the form which it afterwards assumed.

And surely it was not from either accident or oversight that so little trace appears in the Gospels of the designed formation of an institution at all resembling the church or churches of subsequent ages. The historian would more naturally infer that Jesus purposely, as he left no creed, left also no church organization. The Christian body grew into form, like any other body, from itself, organized itself, grew from within as its needs prompted. The polity was framed to give solidity and effect to the teaching, and ecclesiastical systems were devised as expediency or necessity was supposed to dictate.

That this was so is proved by the manner in which Paul speaks of the two institutes which came afterwards

to be considered in the church as permanent and sacramental, and of which the author of "Ecce Homo" makes so much in his endeavour to show that Christ's idea was to build up a new commonwealth after the type of the old theocracy, but only more spiritually understood. He could hardly have attached the same importance to baptism which that author does when he declares that "Christ sent him not to baptize but to preach the Gospel," and as to the Supper of the Lord, he distinctly says that it was to be observed "till he came." Of course this expectation of Christ's speedy return which appears in all the New Testament writings, must have affected the views of the whole Christian body in regard to the establishment of church ordinances and institutions. It could not have occurred to them to think that in establishing what seemed at the time necessary usages and rules of order, they were determining the character of the Church for many centuries to come, and settling the future relations of Christianity to the outlying world. Perhaps also the fact that the setting up of the kingdom of heaven at the second advent of the Son of Man was understood to have been foreseen by some of the later prophets, may suggest one reason for which the Master himself had made so little provision for the Church that was to be.

The truth is that, in social as in political life, institutions are not fitted together according to plan and model. Nothing in the moral sphere can live unless it has acquired the power to live by growth under experience according to its proper nature. There can be no return to a primitive model even if the proper exemplar could be certainly

found; and the supposed authority for ancient usages and institutions is rarely that on which they truly rest. Jesus would seem to have left his disciples free, free to use their best judgment in making the fit applications of his doctrine in any church institutes and observances, and the only proper test to apply to them is this—how far do they tend to place men under his influence, to give effect to his teaching—how much is truly in them of the mind of Christ.

II. But he did leave behind him a small body of disciples, and the actual Church originated in the commission they had received to take up his testimony and preach the kingdom of God. It would inevitably grow, he said, but as a great tree from the smallest grain. It was like the piece of leaven that would work gradually till the whole was leavened. How soon this end would be accomplished he could not tell. Of "the times and seasons the Father only knew." We have, however, especially in the first Gospel, abundant means of learning what was Christ's ideal of the kingdom, and this with the more confidence because the record was made by witnesses who evidently did not always realize the full drift of his words. He knew that the net would gather of all sorts—that tares would grow with the wheat. The churches have always done what they could to avert this state of things, to keep themselves pure, as they say, to gather out and burn the tares;—which shows the radical difference between Christ's thought and theirs, and how little of the precise organization they adopted was ever present to his mind.

But we perceive two things especially characteristic of

his idea of the kingdom, as to how it should spread, and with what effects on human society. First, it was to be universal. There could be no limitation in the reign of God of which the prophets had spoken, whose faith he was now proclaiming. When he taught men to say, "Our Father in heaven," he was not thinking of a God to be worshipped only in the temple, but of a spiritual worship of the Lord of the universe; and in adding, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth," it was surely that the whole earth was present to his mind. Notwithstanding some apparently exceptional expressions, possibly for temporary reasons, or perhaps due to comments of a later tradition, it is evident that Jesus always spoke the language of natural, therefore universal religion; he addressed man as man, and appealed to the reason and conscience proper to man everywhere. Christianity was founded on the faith of individual men and women, carried from mind to mind, from heart to heart. Conversion, the development of right character in individual men, was its object and its means of conquest.

In harmony with this view of the Church, as Christ may have conceived it, as in a sense symbolizing in simple outward form the spirit of the kingdom, and showing what he would set before it as its main purpose, you will observe, in the second place, that his thought was of the rule of God in individual souls. His chief and direct concern was always for individuals. He bade men believe that it was so with the Eternal Father; that there was 'joy in heaven" over the one returning prodigal, the one "sheep that had strayed,"—not as implying no love for

the rest, but rejoicing to have none excepted, no waifs and strays beneath interest, as is apt to be the case with men. "Ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren;" "Even so it is not the will of your Father that one of these little ones," these unregarded and least cared for, "should perish."

Jesus reasoned from providential care of the meanest living thing, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father," to the higher claims of man upon the Divine interest, "Are ye not much better than they?" We owe to Christianity to a large extent the self-reflective habit which contrasts modern with ancient thought, and it has come chiefly from the higher value it sets upon humanity as such. If there is one great theological truth which distinguishes this religion above all others, it is that no soul of man can be too insignificant, no life of man too obscure, no movement and struggle of that life too slight, to ensure the Divine attention. God cares for the individual; wills the salvation of each living soul to rectitude, purity, and goodness; and especially marks with paternal solicitude the weak, the suffering, the lowly. You see, then, what must have been Christ's conception of the Church of God, of any body of men that should desire to follow his teaching and example. It could have no other legitimate purpose than to promote the entire well-being of individual souls, of men everywhere and under all conditions of life.

So has Jesus raised the ideal of man, not in the selective manner of ancient philosophic or Jewish assumption, looking with contempt upon the ignorant millions, but by his care for the poor, the lowest and the lowliest; by his

grand faith in the humanity which could be elevated from the meanest states to the highest and worthiest by force of a divine sympathy; proving the worth of each human soul by emancipating and enlightening all, without admitted exception—individual men, individual women. In the one discipleship of Christian principle could be no distinction of sex, or of culture or social position, neither Gentile nor Jew, bond nor free.

It has taken long to work out this ideal, to establish in fact and reason this grand personal claim of man as man, this principle of equality in human rights, this law of personal liberty, this set in the direction of universal intellectual enlightenment and moral culture. Even yet is it far from complete development, and it is hard to say whether the Church of history has more hindered or helped it forward. But it was to this great end that the Church was called—the gathering of men like-minded with Christ, and presumed to devote themselves to the service of his ideal—for that was the essence and intent of the Church when it first came together in his name.

III. Of the actual formation of the Church, a complete account cannot be given from any historical sources hitherto available; but it is not less startling than instructive to compare Christ's ideas of the kingdom with what the Church had become within a century from his time, and to note the Church's version of the two characteristic points in his teaching to which I have adverted. It was seen that Christianity was, properly speaking, religion in its widest natural sense. It was still taught from psalmists and prophets of the Old Testament as Jesus had taught

it, and the Fathers were greatly exercised as to why this universal religion had come so late, and as to its relation to good men of the times before the gospel. The development of the Logos doctrine arose in great part out of that difficulty. But the Christianity of the Church became narrowed to an exclusive faith by the view which it took, probably under the influence of apocalyptic visions of the coming judgment, respecting the other main point in Christ's teaching, the question of individual salvation. The Church organized itself on the assumption that it was the one ark of safety, the sole refuge from a world otherwise lost and ready to perish. By salvation came to be understood redemption to a state of justification and holiness and the hope of immortal glory, from the rule of the Evil One, from the guilt of sin, and the pains of hell. To be out of the Church was to be beyond the pale of salvation. Thus it became sectarian, blind to all excellence but its own. It was set out of all natural relations with the world at large, until at length, in the pursuit of its object, any exaggeration came to be welcomed; the end consecrated the means, any means of exalting the Church's authority, for the better glory of God and the everlasting good of the the souls of men.

The vicious practice of endeavouring to preserve the power and unity of the Church by a method of exclusiveness, compelling all to come in through one peculiar way, was unhappily adopted very early in its history. It was but a return to Judaism under another name, putting Christ instead of Moses as the way of salvation, and making of the gospel a rigid law of privilege. So, as to the

doctrines necessary to be believed, the old trust in sacrifices was revived in connection with Christ's death and its effect in making men acceptable to God; and the old Semitic belief in God, of which you have been lately reminded, as a Sovereign far removed from real sympathy with mankind, was confirmed in the dogma of the Divine Mediator, the God-man, the only possible link between man and his Maker. Faith in Christ had changed into beliefs about Christ, his divinity and sacrifice; and heresy as to these matters became the greatest of sins, more soul destroying than the worst of crimes.

And the evil has continued to this day, though it can hardly survive, one would think, in presence of the new light of our time. God is teaching men a better thought of Himself, and so enabling us to understand more clearly the lessons of Jesus which the old Jewish spirit, combining with heathen superstitions, so soon perverted.

It is not within my province to inquire as to what or who may be held answerable for this transformation of Christ's "kingdom of heaven on earth" into a Church constitution with creeds to fix its theology, a ritual to set limits to its worship, and rules of discipline for its government; with its teachers converted into a clergy of hierarchical pretensions and powers, and its simple ordinances changed into mystic sacraments of redemption. But when we find so little of this in the earliest records of the Master's teaching, we may perhaps be disposed to think that it was not without intention that he left the word of the gospel a free moral and spiritual influence, established only in the faith and heart of his disciples. Far ahead of

his time, he trusted to Providence, and to the belief that Wisdom would in the end be justified in its children.

It is the tendency of all established institutions to glorify themselves. They come to regard their own subsistence as the main thing, to subordinate the ends to the means, forgetting that they were called into existence for certain objects, to which, if they put themselves above them, they become in fact the greatest hindrances. Grant to any body of men what is called the power of the keys, that is to say, the control over the spiritual destinies of men in an infallible claim of salvation only through their beliefs and ceremonies, and any oppression of the human conscience may be justified, nay, even the harshest persecutions. They can always plead that what they do is in pure fidelity to the truth, according to a common but monstrous perversion of the saying in the Epistle of James, "First pure, then peaceable." It is so easy for men to confound truth with their own opinion; so easy for churches acknowledging the duty of saving souls, to add that theirs is the only way of working out this object. Certain beliefs and practices, being means of grace necessary to the religious life, thus become indispensable to salvation, to which they are at least the only wicket-gate. It may be said indeed that the water in baptism, for example, is not the means of salvation. Yet if it is added that baptism according to a certain mode, being a divine rule, cannot be dispensed with, and that therefore one is at least more safe in following that prescription, it is hard to see how an exclusive organization can be avoided in any church that makes of this a necessary condition of

membership, or how the inference can be eluded that the water is necessary to salvation after all. The monopoly of the Church is established in this patent right.

It is a point of historical interest to observe how the development of the Church proceeded on such false assumptions. I do not quarrel with this development. It seems to me to have been a natural one considering the state of the world at that time, and it has answered, I doubt not, wise providential ends; but if we are reverting to first principles, and desire to find solid standing-ground on which the Church of our time may rest, we shall act most wisely if we refuse to stop anywhere short of Christ himself, and rather study his principles, his ideal of the kingdom, than follow the method of even apostolic Fathers.

For only consider what has been from at least very early times the Church's manner of dealing, first, with the universal claim of Christ's religion: they made it the Catholic religion, universal only in this sense, that every one was bound to adopt it at the peril of his soul; and, secondly, with his doctrine of God's loving care for all men: it was shown, they said, by his provision of a saving church, into which all were now called to enter. All the churches from that time to the present offer to save souls by means of their particular and indispensable organizations of church forms and rites and rules.

In the Romish system, the method is avowedly one of rites, and ordinances, and duly decreed dogma, of all which the virtue depends on the validity of priestly ordination. From the cradle to the grave, through all the varied

incidents of his life, the Catholic enjoys the satisfaction of being never without direction under his Church's authority. Everything is arranged for, even to the secret conduct of his desires and thoughts. He must not think differently from the creeds, he must devoutly submit to the Church's control of his domestic and social conduct, must accept its discipline, follow its ritual, and gratefully receive its sacraments. The Church saves him by taking entire charge of his soul, treating him from first to last as only safe in the state of pupilage,—never to be left alone to the unguided action of his own will.

Protestants do not so interpret Christ's thought of the Church, which with them has not the outward and formal unity claimed and insisted upon from the supposed chair of St. Peter. The true invisible Church may be represented, they say, in many visible churches. But in each of these resides the same kind of authority as is claimed for the Church of Rome, and in saving souls the same sort of control is affected over the means of grace, as they are called,—the mind is preserved from error by fixing the creed, rites and observances are carefully watched over, and the religious life of each member is subjected to church rules more or less stringent and exacting. There is the same endeavour to ensure unity, peace, and order by strong limitations of personal liberty, by keeping souls in the state of spiritual childhood.

In neither case can I feel myself within the range of Christ's religion or of his doctrine of salvation. His demand was for a childlike and trusting love of God: his appeal was always to the free mind and conscience,

to the natural sense of right and truth. Salvation with him was God's assurance of mercy to the penitent, involving the duty of men to live with others on terms of rectitude and charity. Hence in true Christian culture is provision for the growth to a grand ideal of all-round manhood,—womanhood, in every element of strength and beauty of character, and solid reason for the encouragement of what has been nobly designated the "enthusiasm of humanity," which sees the Divine image in every human soul, and loves God in all His children.

IV. It is not impossible, I think, to frame a practical conception of a church according to Christ's principles, if we understand by it, not an exclusive body set off and kept separate from the rest of mankind, but the natural union of men brought together, in any place, in fellowship of spirit with Christ and with each other, to help forward by mutual support and counsel, and by joint action in various modes of useful Christian work, the realization of the kingdom of God on earth. Not without deep meaning is that remarkable saying, "One is your Father in heaven, and all ye are brethren." Would it not seem as though the idea in Christ's mind was that of a substantial and generous extension of the life of brotherhood, the family life, through the medium of communities of his followers, until it should embrace mankind? Is it not always found that as are the Christian homes of our people, so are the churches to which they belong? The pieties of the one come naturally into wider exercise in the other, the mutual kindnesses and tenderness, the desire to benefit and help. The church becomes the cherished home of souls when

it is constituted of really religious and genial-minded men drawn by mutual affinity into this wider sphere of obligations, and eager to realize therein the true life of the well-ordered family, every member of which, while feeling himself loved and cared for by every other, knows his own place of kindred service, and strives in loving duty to do for the rest all the good in his power. But this is in truth just one form of the social embodiment of Christ's thought of the kingdom of God. As we believe his gospel to be a true gospel of humanity, the divinest law of social well-being, so we understand his church to exemplify what society ought to be, what it must be ere it can be affirmed that the prayer is fulfilled, "Thy will be done on earth." There must be, of course, some kind of organization in every community; but the church truest to Christ's ideal will not be a church which trusts to corporate rules for its principle of cohesion, especially to rules tending to isolate it in exclusion from the world. How could the leaven act unless in close contact with the body on which it is intended to operate? The sole legitimate end and rule of action must be the welfare of every member of the human family.

For this is the ultimate aim of family life, as of all social and political institutions—individual welfare and culture. In ancient times this was less heeded; societies or states made little of the sacrifice of individual interests. Even in the modern time, though all are agreed in respecting whatever political system proves the best for each individual under it, yet one of the most democratic of theories is content to lay down as the best available rule and end

of government, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number;" but in the Christian commonwealth there can be no exceptions, and the mission of the Church is not fulfilled if it does not seek out first the neediest, the most ignorant and helpless, following Christ's rule of striving mainly "to seek and save the lost." The law of mutual dependence, mutual benefit, covers a wide area if the principle be true to which the Church testifies, that all men are brothers in the kingdom of God; and a common devotion to the family interest is not so strange a quality that it cannot be enlisted in this noble service of humanity in the name of Christ. It will not be wanting where the kinship is recognized and the sense of brotherhood is more than a name. We accept and honour the devotion of self to others in brothers or sisters, in fathers or mothers. It is a God-given quality, happily natural to some more highly constituted characters; but in the Church the duty devolves upon every member. A life spent in others' service, all men honour as a well-spent life; and it is this, in whatever degree it may be found, that makes for any church its brightest crown of glory. Man was not made to be alone. He is influenced by others, and he ought to feel that he cannot live amongst men and not be himself a power for good or evil. It is a grand doctrine to teach, that in the spirit of Christ may all men everywhere find themselves in the true brotherhood of mutual helpfulness which we sometimes think of as the mere dream of a golden age, but which it is well known that many of all the denominations are daily striving to make a reality to the best of their light and power.

V. Such I take to be the true Christian ideal: let me now ask you to consider how far the grand conception is realized. For surely the world does not subsist, nor is the life of men continued upon it, under the careful and orderly rule of its Creator from age to age, in order merely that out of it, and that by no process of natural selection, a favoured Church may grow, "a little spot enclosed by grace, out of the world's wide wilderness." It was, as Jesus saw, the fatal error of the Israel of his time to conceive itself in this manner as the sole object of Jehovah's paternal interest. The Church exists for ends of spiritual and moral culture generally, and that, by its testimony of God's truth to the world, men may be enlightened and guided and strengthened in moral conviction, in the love of right and goodness. Not for its own sake, then, is this "city set upon a hill," but to become a centre of attractive moral and loving influences; and no church deserves its name excepting as it holds aloft the light of conscience, of religious obligation, and shows the way of mutual help, of intelligent service to mankind.

But this is not the Church from which in such immense numbers men of all classes in our day are known to be alienated. They perfectly see the grandeur of Christ's ideal, and know how glorious seemed the social promise which it implied. But they no longer believe in the communities called Christian which have so often and so bitterly deceived them, which do not make the promise a reality, and rather strive after self-aggrandizement by making proselytes amongst them, than for their own sake to do them good. What cruel things have been done in

Christ's name, what oppressions of the poor maintained in law and common practice by professing followers of the lowly-minded Jesus! And for how little do his precepts weigh in the councils and business and daily life of so-called Christian peoples! If, for example, in our own nation, the ministry of the Church had been equal to one of its chief functions, and had always given to the people real religious teaching, "taking things more seriously," as Matthew Arnold would say, how different must have been at this moment our national condition and character! I do not mean simply of the Established Church, because a nation may be religious without a formal, legal, and endowed Church Establishment; and there is no body of Christians amongst us that is not in part responsible for, does not help in some degree to form, the national character. But it is to be regretted that more of the numerous churches of the land do not concern themselves with the sovereign interests of public as well as private duty, and strive to establish the grand principles of a noble national life on the solid ground of Christ's humane religion, and his deep reverence for the sacred laws of truth and justice and charity.

And yet I cannot believe that Christ's conception of the kingdom which he taught men to look and hope for in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," was in any sense an impracticable one. If he could say that his was an "easy yoke," it is hardly to be supposed that he has imposed on the Christian conscience a law not to be obeyed without superhuman virtue. I do not profess to understand much that is said about self-sacrifice, either as "the secret

of Christ" or as a mystic rule of perfection. It seems to me that his lessons, when properly read in the light of his time, are perfectly translatable into the language of every-day personal morality, and in application to the tendencies and habits of modern trade and living.

We conceive the church to be a body of men united in Christian principle, teaching it by action, protesting therefore against a life of selfish worldliness. So far as this point is concerned, every member of the church is called to sacrifice the lower self in man to the higher; and the application to personal character and to men's ordinary pursuits is obvious. It is no real gain to a man to live a selfish life, none to be dishonest, quite as little to be harsh and grasping in his dealings, as many who believe themselves pious men too often are. There is indeed in their case a sacrifice, but it is of the higher and nobler aims of life to the meaner, of the great gains of virtue and excellence to the poorer objects of self-indulgence, self-interest. The common maxim, "Each for himself and God for us all," implies a wilful distortion of the true sense of human life; but though in any church fashioned upon Christ's ideas the utmost good of each member, nay, of all mankind, must be the distinct aim kept in view by all, this is no demand for a blind, unmeaning self-sacrifice. The natural pursuit of good, of happiness, is not contravened; it is but set upon the right, the only wise track. It is to be sought through society, in helping others, in receiving help from others, just as it is, as I have hinted, in family life, and as it would be in the world at large were the law of Christian principle triumphant.

Who thinks it so great and almost impossible a thing to make sacrifices for the good of those dear to him, to find his pleasure in theirs? The thing is as common as man, wherever subsists affection enough to justify it, to make it reasonable; and the Church, conceived as the kingdom of God realized, extends such affection by making the relationship of man to man everywhere a sensible reality. If all are felt to be of one family, brothers and sisters in God, then the duty becomes a pride and pleasure, of doing for all all the good we can. And this it is we understand when we speak of the Christian spirit in society; not some mystic self-immolation, impracticable to the generality, but the practical thing that is to many only too intelligible with their selfish ways, though they profess to honour the ideal when some enthusiast exhibits it in strange fashions clearly out of the ordinary line of duty—to get the strong to see that the weak are of the same clan, the same brotherhood; the rich to see that if they do not care for the poor they are putting slight upon their own flesh and blood; and all to understand that God's own care for every man, for the good and growth of each in purity, in intelligence, in goodness, is the divinest thing we can conceive of in the great Father of us all.

We are not advancing these things for the first time, though what I am now saying is the drift of the various discourses to which you have lately listened, the practical outcome of all our Unitarian thought. It was the true life and glory of a late school of thought in the English Church, of which Maurice and Robertson and Kingsley were the most prominent representatives, that they believed

in God's love of man as man; not as possible unsubstantial angel or sublimated spirit, but as the child of God in forms of matter, and so related to all the grand laws of the physical universe. They honoured God, as we do, in universal law. They regarded science as the revelation of God's will, and they looked for the Church in the wide kingdom of God, not in ecclesiastical formulas and constitutions. We do not indeed think, as they did, that it is necessary to postulate an inferior wicked god in order to solve the mystery of evil elements in the life of man. To us, the reign of Law is absolutely universal, and however difficult may be the element of personality to deal with, we accept this principle as the key also of the moral universe. We find there growth, progress, moral evolution, and so we accept the large scientific idea of the City of God, believing that the future and the present are one in the eternal order; that in an important sense the kingdom of God is not a mere future golden era, but that it is now and always, and always has been; and that the fulfilment of the Divine purposes, though it run this way or that for the moment, is not to be frustrated through even the caprices of free-will. God seems to struggle, but it is simply that the Eternal Creator is always creating, always active, and He never loses sight of His object. If we but know what that is, we know what must ultimately come. It is no uncertain conflict with hostile powers, but intelligence and will dealing with intelligence and will according to their proper nature, and helping us in fit and suitable ways to reach the light of His eternal glory.

VI. But whatever be our conception of the kingdom of

God, or of Christ's teaching respecting it, and of the poor and imperfect manner in which it has been embodied in the many divided churches of Christendom, we recognize the fact that all these churches sprang from a single assembly of Christ's followers. The congregation was the original unit. So is it still, in our view of the Church as an institution. One holy church of God has there been indeed always amongst men, the fellowship of the good and true of every age and clime, and whosoever will may claim kindred in this church with a grand and noble spiritual ancestry of men whose very names are an uplifting influence. Whoever by devotion to duty and humanity qualifies himself to hear the approving voice of the sainted dead, the elder heroes of this truest divine service, may see stretched out to him across the ages the hand of the lofty brotherhood in whose lives on earth the human race has been exalted to higher levels of aspiration and achievement. Christ's kingdom of the Spirit is this true commonwealth of the faithful, the merciful, the pure in heart. He formed no church on the narrow principle of forbidding any because "he followed not with us." It was his saying, that "whoever is not against us is for us." We believe in this communion of saints, in the identity and family likeness, the unity and kinship of all holy and good men of every race and name, of many distinct churches and religious professions, nor can we suffer ourselves to be shut away from these our kindred of good and great ones by any denominational walls of separation.

But for all practical purposes of religious fellowship, we

hold historically and actually to the Christian congregation. I must add something, therefore, upon certain points which more or less distinguish our own confraternity of what we claim to be free churches.

In maintaining, as we do, the freedom of the Church of Christ as a purely voluntary society, bound together by affinity, but on the basis of individual liberty, let me first say that we do not uphold societies of mere personal convenience or choice, dependent on caprice, that may be joined or left at pleasure. Freedom is neither license nor indifference. There is a law of duty, though each must interpret that law in the light of his own conscience. We emphasize fidelity to conviction; and paltering with this, or concealment of one's real opinion, we hold to be a great moral peril, surely not to be tempted by those who desire to be rid of cant and unreality, especially in matters religious. The maxim that a man may believe as he pleases, is a just one as against interference of the State with private liberty. If a man chooses to be careless or holds the wildest opinions, no State has the right to coerce his judgment by threat or bribe. But see how each man's personal responsibility becomes thus the greater. He cannot believe as he pleases, but as truth and duty lead him, the imperative duty of being faithful in his thought to God and to the great brotherhood of man, plainly a solemn matter, not to be lightly regarded.

There is one point in regard to which a free church is especially liable to be misunderstood, nay itself to be tempted sometimes into inconsistency. The institution of a church, though it be only a congregation habitually

worshipping together, supposes some organization, however slight; but how to reconcile this with entire individual freedom! The difficulty has always subsisted, and so far as we can discover there is but one solution of it—not by subjecting liberty to new restraints, after the manner in which the old creeds were formed, clause after clause being added to meet new heresies as they arose, but by preserving ever fresh the vitality of church life, the only means of keeping freedom healthy and true to its objects. Liberty is not the end, but the necessary condition for securing certain ends. The freedom of a decaying church is little to boast of; it is but license to grow rotten in its own natural or unnatural way. Or if there be still some sap of life tending merely to a license of wild and useless luxuriance, it must be that the practical ends of church life have been forgotten, that individual fancies and ambitions have overmastered the great purpose of Christian edification. But only freedom can give room to correct the aberrations of freedom—no stringent law of public creed or subscription or oath, or even of trust-deeds crammed with special definitions of doctrine, can maintain a church, national or otherwise, within limits about which public opinion has grown indifferent. To keep opinion alive and intelligent is the only remedy, and it is an efficient remedy. It can even keep the pulpit in reasonable order, when it is the true public opinion, and not the mere expression of some few individual and perhaps too prominent wills; for the utmost claim of the open trust and non-subscribing principle does not preclude the right of a congregation at any time to defend itself from being

turned aside from the pursuit of its own edification according to its own free right of judgment.

But it is at least a disadvantage, we are reminded, that our churches are bound by no creed, no standard of views, agreed upon by all and easy of recognition from without. The Unitarian profession brings together of course kindred types of character, and, standing on the same free principles, and looking at things in the same open light, we come largely to similar conclusions, the result of similar habits of thought—and we do not think it sectarian to unite under this common thought and principle, as attachment to one's own family implies no indifference towards others—nor yet to be outspoken, to controvert what we think to be untrue. It is the spirit of partisanship which makes sects sectarian, the pretension of infallible right, the assumption of an exclusive limit of orthodoxy and salvation, all which is directly opposed to our fundamental principle.

But as to creeds, though we have our own definite, strong convictions, we respect those of others, and regard as sacred their right to differ from us. This indeed with many is the bond that holds them to the only churches which thoroughly adopt the principle of perfect liberty in this respect. It may look perilously like indifference, and we may seem held together by a mere rope of sand; but it is not so. It is rather that we value liberty above the most tempting chances of popular influence which a set creed might help to give us. It may be a cause of weakness to the body, but it is nevertheless our glory: we reach the crown through the cross.

And perhaps I may now venture to add, though this be another point on which we cannot help lying open to grave popular misapprehension, that we are not a sect in the usual sense of the term. If a clergyman renounces the creeds of the Church of England and avows himself a non-Trinitarian, he falls into rank with all other similar believers; his avowal determines that, and there is no other way of joining the Unitarian body. He could do no more than to encourage his people in friendly intercourse with other Unitarians, or perhaps himself become a member of professedly Unitarian societies, like our "Association" for example, and readily meet on brotherly terms, and perhaps exchange pulpits with other Unitarian ministers. He does not the less belong to the Unitarian sect, in the only sense in which we are a sect, because he may see good reason to decline this exchange of courtesies with others whose position is quite as independent and free as his own.

But such reason is unhappily often found in the vicious common habit, generated by centuries of experience in churches marked off from each other mainly by specific opinions, the habit, namely, of attributing to Unitarians whatever views any prominent Unitarian may at any time have put forth; and accordingly some most worthy men have thought, that from even our free position they must stand aside, in order to secure their own liberty from misconception. We cannot help this. We can but look to time and the growing intelligence of the churches to spread the divine vision of principle above all authorized creeds, as the only framework in which a church can be set that resolves to keep itself open to the light, and trusts

everything to the spirit, nothing to forms of organized profession.

We know that in many ways we suffer as a body from the very diffusion of our characteristic beliefs under the circumstances to which I have alluded. The stress of social influences has power to keep many who hold our opinions within the churches to which they are attached, partly because they shrink from what is coming to seem an almost needless division, but even more that the name we bear is connected with the odium of past times, and would not be understood in the sense in which they might otherwise be willing enough to assume it; and people cannot see that the free mind in a free church is not properly answerable for the beliefs of others, but only for its own.

But some good men have confessed that they shrink from religious free thought lest it should injuriously affect their religious life. Let me add, therefore, in conclusion, one word upon this subject. We do not idolize the intellect, though we think it our duty to use without reserve every power of man's God-given nature in the research of religious truth. We are a practical people, not greatly addicted to metaphysics or philosophy. It has been well said recently that the two guiding lights of the Unitarian body have always been Christ's law of Righteousness and Christ's rule of Charity; while as to religious sentiment and feeling, this we may venture to say, that those *ought*, at least, to be the most religious of men, as well as the most benevolent, who have been taught such views of God and man, of human duty and destiny, as you have

lately heard set forth; who cannot think of God an unworthy thought; who discern the recoverable image of the Father in the lowest and worst forms of the universal brotherhood of humanity; who see in retribution the law of divine love, in salvation the magnifying of the rule of conscience, the reflected law whereon rests the very throne of the majesty of the Father; who hear His living voice in nature, but also in the soul of man, and in every inspiration of sanctifying truth which He has been pleased to give Who never leaves Himself without witness, nor His children without Fatherly guidance. And especially ought we to be the most sincerely religious, the most loving and tender of men, who feel all the attractive force of God's unwearying love in the gracious tremor of Divine sympathy which has vibrated throughout the Christian centuries from the uttered word of His Fatherly consideration and pity in the Son of Man; whose worship, therefore, should be in every expression of it an outpouring of reverent acceptance of His will, and their obedience the habit of childlike devotion, that watches its own deeds, not in any spirit of self-righteousness, but with the jealous eagerness of daily solicitude lest the immortal dignity of the high estate to which we are called be sullied by aught beneath the sanctity of a true religious life. There can be nothing surely in views like these to hinder the growth of a deep and fruitful piety, and we hope greatly that with the larger accessions of religious men now making throughout Christendom to this form of Christian belief, the grave faults incident to separate bodies being avoided, and the causes of division being removed through enlarging intel-

ligence and the growth of mutual kindness, all the best influences of a true and genial church life may increasingly associate these high conceptions with the earnest, faithful, devout, and brotherly spirit to which they are naturally allied, and bring heart and mind together in the thought and life of Christians, still bearing perhaps many names, but all one in the union of the holy spirit of truth and goodness and charity.

X.

The Future Life.

By CHARLES WICKSTEED, B.A.

In approaching a subject, the difficulty of treating which is only equalled by the responsibility of doing so and by the momentousness of its own issues, I wish to state distinctly the intended aims and limits of this lecture. I propose to dwell with much insistance only on those arguments which, if not undisputed, are still unexhausted and certainly un-overthrown; and yet I do not wish by any omissions I may make of usually advanced proofs, thereby to appear to slight any ground of hope in favour of the reality of a future life that has ever brought conviction or comfort to a single human soul.

In discussing a subject so vast, so impalpable, so out of all ordinary human range, nothing is narrower and few things less excusable than to insist on the reception by all of the particular arguments which are strongest to our own minds, and on the absolute rejection of those which appear to us weak. The strength or weakness of an argument on so distant and removed a subject as this, where the hope

entertained is an individual possession, and the hope not entertained an individual loss,—the strength or weakness of an argument is after all not so much what it may appear to others, or perhaps even be in itself, as what it is to the individual constitution of mind which assimilates it or is insensible to it. Nor do I wish to ignore or even to undervalue a single objection made by any doubter, often in unwillingness and sorrow, against the probability of such a life.

The future life seems to me to mean simply and exactly life in the future. What I believe in is life. Time, place, modes, are mere incidents. We may and do and perhaps must think and speculate about them, but they are incidental, collateral, and often in themselves very uncertain. What I believe in is our life, and that that life is continued, from age to age it may be, and from world to world, but continued somewhere and in some manner, after its removal from the present earthly stage. Both thoughts are well expressed in the language of the Scriptures, the one in the evangelic utterance, "Neither in this world nor in the next,"* and the other in the epistolary expression, "The power of an endless life."† This is all to which I absolutely commit myself in the present argument—to the fact and the truth of the continued life, not necessarily to any one of the received theories of its nature and character.

At the same time it is obvious that that life must have

* Matt. xii. 32: *οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι*, "Neither in this age, nor in the coming."

† Heb. vii. 16: *κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου*, "The power of an indissoluble life."

characteristics of some kind in itself; and in order to realize it at all to our minds, we must have, if not some knowledge, at least some intimate persuasion what those characteristics in the general are likely to be; and, on the other hand, what in the eye of reason and common sense and common feeling it is unlikely, or even morally impossible, they should be.

First, then, is death the end of our personal and individual being? As far as the body is concerned, I think it is; not, however, that even the body is annihilated, for each element of it passes, as far as we can see, into some other form, and a few centuries would show it dispersed into, and constituting a part of, ten thousand other forms of bodily or material existence; but the individual body is dispersed, and is no longer the special aggregate of materials which constituted itself and made it a separate personal entity. Then what reason have you to suppose that such is not the course and the end of the whole being man? Because the body is not the whole being man. This seems to me one of the plainest and most certain facts of our existence. I must deprive myself of all powers of observation and of reason before I can cease to be sure that there is in each of us a form of being quite different from our merely bodily being. You may call it thought or mind or soul, or what you like. It is indifferent to me. What I mean is, that there exists—and I should have antecedently thought that it was clear to every man's consciousness that there did exist—a second nature in him, call it a spiritual nature, which has qualities quite apart and distinct from any visible bodily quality; a something which I do not

say is here and now actually or always independent of the body for the means of its manifestation, but which certainly is distinct in character from any and every simple attribute of the body—which often manifests its existence, and not through the body—and which sometimes, though manifesting itself otherwise, could not possibly be manifested through the body or any of its senses or organs. Thus, therefore, there are two distinct classes of emotions and passions in our complex nature; and though we may use the same phrases to designate both, they are mutually different, if not opposed, and distinct, if not entirely unconnected. The hunger or thirst of the body is one thing; the hunger or thirst of the soul, another. The hunger or thirst for bread or for water is one thing; the hunger or thirst after righteousness, another. Though we often thus apply the same terms to the bodily as we do to the spiritual appetites and emotions, speaking of desire, love, energy, in both cases, the difference is certainly more than metaphorical—it is real. They differ in character. They differ not only in sphere and object, but in nature. If there be any difference at all in things anywhere, there is one here; and we all, I should think, know it and feel it.

But granting this difference in kind to be a real one, even these more spiritual forms and conditions it is said come through, are dependent on, and therefore must live and die with, the bodily organism. I doubt that either the fact or the conclusion is correct. There is as much evidence that the spiritual or thinking power is sometimes independent of the bodily organization as there is that it is always and inevitably dependent on it. The frequent

instances of periods of mental aberration ceasing, and the normal condition of the spiritual and intellectual man returning, and that often to all appearance through causes acting simply on the mind and feelings, are surely as much in favour of the idea of some power existing that is not entirely dependent on the body, as the opposite cases, when the mental change appears closely connected with some bodily change, are in favour of the necessary connection between the two. The cases of mental and spiritual power existing and acting triumphantly above and beyond all outward circumstances (disease, loss of sight, hearing, and the power to move), are at least as clear and certain in themselves as any instances of that power being wholly destroyed by these unfavourable conditions.

You have probably known, at least I know that I have, instances of persons lying at the moment of death expressing, though only just audibly, the clearest intellectual, moral, social, personal and emotional thoughts that their souls had ever conceived in the best and strongest days of their lives, and while the bodily life was on the very verge of extinction using its last remaining function to exhibit the entire health and vigour of their mental nature, showing the absolute contemporaneousness and co-existence of a perishing body and a strong healthy soul. Say not you have known many instances of the contrary. So have I. But one single instance of the kind I mention demolishes the dictum that the mind inevitably shares the fate and fortunes of the body. Indeed, it is just as difficult—to me it is far more difficult—to understand how abstract thought, the love of justice, of mercy, of

truth, of God, can be produced through and by "the grey tissues of the brain substance," as it is to believe in these, invisible it may be, but real thoughts and affections, as possible entities apart from these tissues; and it is just as difficult—to me it is far more difficult—to see how the brain can force these spiritual realities to rot with itself, as it is to conceive of them, when once created, continuing to exist in a spiritual independence of their own.

It is nothing that the manifestation of the spiritual man disappears when the body dies, because that spirit never was visible when the body lived, and always seemed to be dealing with a world *not* this, even while outwardly connected with the world that *is* this. So that without saying that there is nothing in the facts and reasonings which are supposed to go for proof that death is the end of the whole being man, I do say that they are not conclusive—that we must not regard this statement as proved—that there are many indications that it is by no means incontestable—that at least we are not prevented by the supposed presence of an irremovable objection on the threshold, from entering on other considerations in favour of the view we hold. So that to those whose possibilities of thought are limited to the range of material supplied by the five senses, we say, that even on their own grounds we do not concede them an indisputable victory; and that as there is another region of facts—facts of consciousness, facts of history, facts of moral reasoning—which is at least as real in itself (some able men have maintained more real) as the region of the five senses, we shall have no reason to be deterred by any supposed insurmountable

objection, such as that I have described, from presently entering upon that region.

But in the mean time the objector stays our progress by the presentation of a further difficulty. Granting, he says, that there be such a thing as the spiritual immortality you plead for, what is the sphere in which, what are the limits within which, it exists and takes effect?

Now I beg to remind you of the limitation with which I began. What I believe in, I stated, is the continuance of human life after death. I am very much interested in all questions arising out of, or involved in, the development and application of this truth, but I am bound to nothing but the fact itself. I am responsible for no details whatever. I may enter into such from an irresistible fascination, from an irrepressible curiosity, as matters of legitimate and interesting speculation. But my experience is, that with insisted-upon details we import illegitimate difficulties, the incurring of which, and the encounter with which, are perfectly gratuitous, because with details it is impossible for us in the nature of things to deal. They are entirely beyond our sphere. We can exercise nothing but surmise and conjecture in reference to them. They form no part whatever of our argument. Of a life, the conditions of which are utterly unknown to us, and from our present limited capacities even inconceivable by us, we can draw no picture that shall be wholly reliable. The utmost we can do is to approach the conjecturally probable.

But as the question just asked about the extent or the limits of this immortality is part of the fact, though incapable of precise answer or solution, I may briefly state the

point of view in which the subject presents itself to me. I do not, then, believe that we can assign, even in theory, any limits whatever. These are knowable only to, and can be imposed only by, the Supreme Creative Power. What in the world are we to know of the infinite series of quantities and qualities ranging between Omniscience and what we call instinct? and how are we to mark the point at which one series or one individual is fit to live on, and another only fit to die off? It seems to me mere presumption and vanity in us to affect such knowledge, to affect anything indeed but interesting conjecture. And therefore I disown any obligation to answer this question. I simply say this. There is a spiritual life, partly formed and fashioned, it may be, at one stage through the agency of outward and material organisms, but in itself, and finally at least, distinct from these in their present forms. When this begins, I cannot say; in what cases it does not fulfil the conditions of continuance, I cannot say. There are various degrees of vitality. There may be various degrees of immortality. And the vitality here may be the measure of the immortality hereafter. It is possible to conceive of annihilation or of absorption, and it is as possible to conceive of individual immortality. I cannot prescribe limits to the spiritual chemistry of the Creator. There is an apathy in the mixed natures of earth which is akin to a non-personal existence; there is a subsidence into the material so gross, that there seems to be no reason why it should not stay there and be absorbed in it. There are natures of an iniquity so extreme, that there seems no reason to suppose they should not be suicidal, that they

should not extinguish themselves, and fall and perish beneath the corruption of their own rottenness and the weight of their own depravity, exhaling themselves, like fœtid vapours, into the purifying elements around them, and with the like effect. The annihilation and disappearance of certain natures is not at all incompatible with the idea of the immortality of others. The old theory of the divines, that all are alike and equal in heaven, is an incredible monstrosity of thought. You might as well say—supposing some spiritual power in animals surviving their death—that all the inhabitants of heaven would still be equal, the weasel and Shakespeare. Where does immortality begin? is no wiser and no more difficult question than, where does virtue begin, where does knowledge begin, where does sin begin? The question of my hypothesis would be, where does the fitness for survival begin? and this must be decided by some fuller means of judgment than ours.

In truth, the firmest basis for our hope of continued life rests on that Judgment, rests on that Benignity, that Justice, that Consistency, and that Wisdom, which exist alone in the great Creator, and with whom we leave the whole host of these questions of detail to us insoluble. I have indeed known men of a profound piety, and, amidst sorrows and persecutions and almost perpetual bodily anguish, of an unswerving faith in God and His goodness, and giving up their lives to the search after religious truth; other men, too, whose lives have been throughout lives of purity, kindness, and human service, unable to realize this hope, and willing to accept as the best for them, if God

so willed it, the termination of their being with the present state.

But I confess I am myself unable to rise to the height of this self-abnegation and surrender. There is so much in my life I wish had been otherwise—so much I wish to make up for and amend—that if I were denied all opportunity of compensating in a renewed life for the shortcomings, the errors, and neglected duties of this, the remorse which at times overwhelms me now would become intolerable, and make the remainder of my days a misery. And I cannot, too, give up my claims on my Maker. I am here a spiritual being created by Himself, and, in a sense, in His own image. To speak it reverently, I am now a being as well as He. I cannot consent to my own destruction. I am as a son, grown up, who has rights from the Father that gave him birth. And I say, if He has justice and goodness, He will not rob me of my legitimate expectations, legitimate because created by Himself.

In truth, to me, the ultimate ground of my belief in immortality is my belief in God. If I believe in God—that is, in a wise, true, just, and loving Power, my Father, creating and ruling us all—I must believe in a continued life. If there were no such God, if we were the subjects either of some impersonal Power or of a cruel and heartless Creator, then alone would a disbelief in immortality become possible to me. Side by side with all the brightness and gladness and beauty of this world, there still lies a frightful mass of suffering so undeserved, of cruelty so apparently relentless, of injustice so incredible, that it is impossible to believe at once in a just and benign Creator,

and in this state, so full of pangs and misery and wrongs, being the whole of an individual's existence. The shrieks of innumerable men and women and little children—helpless and harmless, and, as far as we know, not only sinless, but often beautifully good—through age after age have ascended, and are now ascending, to the ear of the Power that made them; and if this be the whole of their being, if this be not a part only of a prolonged existence, during which these inequalities shall be explained as a portion of the present necessity of things, and rectified, what ground have we for thinking our Creator good? And if the frightful mass of the corresponding sin and wrong mixed up with and occasioning all this misery, is to pass on with its present inadequate exposure and punishment, violating even man's sense of the righteous retribution due to it, what ground is there for thinking our Creator a Vindicator and just? Both suppositions, that there is not such a God, and that there is not such a continuation of life, are to me alike incredible, and they and their opposites stand or fall together.

Why, indeed it may be asked, are such dreadful things permitted now? I know not. I only know they exist, and I suppose for a time they must continue to do so, as the result of our awful, no doubt, but grand possession of free-will—often, alas! so abnormally, so wantonly exercised—and of our ignorance and of our unfinished training, and of our possession of a nature that may be aberrant, because it is not and cannot be wholly governed by the laws of any controlling external mechanism. These sad things are parts of a process, such as earthquakes and tornados,

ending in good, or there is no possible justification of them. The very argument founded on the justice and mercy of God, which is now making a belief in the hell of the divines impossible, applies with as strong, if with a less intense, force to the truth that God does not part with us here, or we with Him.

But passing away from this chamber of horrors into the average life of man, each one of us, even the happiest, is still justified by common sense and the absolute sense of right in saying to his fellow, Has God made you fond of knowledge, and do you think that He is going to close the sphere and opportunity of that knowledge almost as soon as He has opened them out to you? What! does the good teacher teach his child to read, and having taught him close the book after the first chapter, and never allow him to open it again? Has God just unlocked the door of the universe to us, and when we have hastily looked into it with longing eyes and glanced at its unexamined, or, what is worse, its half-examined wonders, will He close the door, and send us back, in the newly-awakened hunger of our souls, into darkness and atrophy? Does He say to the great minds He has caused to grow up in this world, "Turn over the page of the book of knowledge and of life;" and when with eager fingers they clutch to turn the next, say to them, "No more, for ever," and shut up the book before their longing, sorrowing, and amazèd eyes? Does He say to us, Live here in the exercise of such affections, that after a time your being is wrapped up in that of others, and your loved ones have come to be part of yourselves,

and you have been taught by God Himself to love them so dearly that to part with them at all is a sorrow, but to part with them for ever would be like eternal death to you, would rob the sun of all its brightness, the earth of all its verdure—does He say to us, "Bar the gates of your hearts, blind and drench your eyes with tears—you shall never see one of them again"?

I ask my Maker in agony why He made me—why begin, why plan a failure? Why raise a thirst, and shut up the fountain of supply at the moment the thirst is greatest? What! are there difficulties in accepting this belief in a continued life, and are there none in rejecting it? Even the seed put into the soil by human hands is not put there only to peer above the ground, show a few leaves and die, but to grow up and blossom, and fulfil the uttermost possibility of its being, and bring forth fruit after its kind, and the very best fruit it has by its own nature been made capable of yielding.

The infant contains within itself the germ and possibility of the thoughtful and cultivated man. Why not the man the germ and possibility of a still higher nature?

This is an age of the world in which scarcely a limit should be put to the possibilities of development. We have seen such wonderful exhibitions of the before inconceivable applications of simple natural and chemical forces, that our faith in possibilities should become illimitable. Is this an age to believe in the limitation of the powers and resources of the Creator, and that He has come to an end of the possible developments of his noblest work? Why, the addition of a single sense would trans-

mute the world to us! The lens only contains within itself part of the possibilities of the eye. And if we can make one set of glasses by which becomes discernible to us the otherwise invisible star whose place is millions of millions of miles away from us, and another set by which is made visible the minutest fibres in the wing of the minutest insect, is it not surely a possibility in the hands of the great Creator that He shall do with the eye what man can do with a lens? And so with memory, with reason, with imagination, with reverence, with love, with purity—let us rise to a sense of the highest possibilities even of the present, and we shall have the most convincing ground for extending the possibilities, and if so, on moral and intellectual grounds, the probabilities, of the future.

Readily, therefore, can we conceive of the indefinite enlargement of the powers, the indefinite extension of the pursuits, the indefinite elevation also of the spheres of duty and service, and the intensification of the joys of the present. And we believe that this, under a wise and benignant God, is our destiny in the future, and that this life is a stage of initiatory discipline, leading to still higher spheres and happier conditions of being beyond the mere outward, earthly, transient life now connected with and dissolved with our bodies.

If, to my mind at least, it is impossible to equalize our various immortalities, and to reduce our lives in the great, yet not to any of us distant, future to one level of pursuit, intensity, and progress, so it is not to be expected that the

vitality of hope here should be any more equal and uniform than the vitality of mental being there. If there will be various degrees in the intensity of our life in the actual reality of our hereafter, it stands to reason that there should be corresponding varieties in the intensity of our hope of it here. As in the future some must have, by the effect of the natures they carry with them, a higher being and fruition than others, and star must differ from star in glory, so here in some the hope must be weaker and in others stronger. You can no more level and equalize natures on earth than you can in heaven. And accordingly we are not surprised (nay, we should be surprised were it otherwise) that in some men this hope is earnest and ardent, in others faint and cold, and still in others nearly non-existent. The high, spiritual, holy nature has already its affinity with, and almost its life in, that future of joy and progress of which it feels itself a part even here; while a low, base, sensual, and selfish nature, whose almost only developed affinities are with the outward and the material, must hold that hope, if hold it it does at all, in an unrealizing faintness, if not fear. The man whose life has been full of sunshine, prosperous, healthy, genial and glad, and with the circle of his love up to a given moment untrespassed on by death, how are we to expect that he should nurture in his busy and satisfied soul the hope of a life beyond this to him happy earth, with the same passionate longing, the same craving for rest and refuge, the same fulness of persuasion, that sustains the soul, and dries the tears, and soothes the sorrows, of the

sick, suffering, and deserted creature to whom earth has given no home and little happiness, and whose only hope is in a future and in God?

It should stagger no one, therefore, to find how unequal is this hope among us. Nay, the reality it represents would seem less real if it were otherwise. I know that it is possible for us individually to neglect or to drive down this hope into virtual extinction. I know we can do this, as well as many other sad and unhappy things, for ourselves. We can do it with the love of virtue, we can do it with the love of knowledge, the love of man, the love of God, or any other of the higher affections and aspirations of the soul.

This great hope is then, I conceive, as much a subject of spiritual culture as any other affection of our nature, and the man who entertains it deeply will rejoice in calling to mind, for the sake of others if he needs it little for himself, every consideration that tends to cheer and fortify the sacred instinct and the dear persuasion of his heart. He calls to mind, for instance, our intense dread and hatred of extinction and our eager clinging to life, which are as much a part of our nature and constitution, and put there as much by the Author of that nature, as speech and reason and hope and fear are; and it is seldom anything but a desire to escape the disappointments and sufferings and sorrows of our present life, and to rise to heaven as to our native sky, that reconciles us to death at all. He calls to mind how undying and universal in some form or other has been this hope among mankind all through the records of spiritual experience; through black

and white, through savage and civilized humanity, from Kamtschatka to Peru, from Lapland to Del Fuego, through Scandinavia and India, Greece and Rome, the patient inquiring traveller goes, finding everywhere signs, albeit often rough or faint, yet traceable and actual, of this great hope, which therefore seems to be an ineradicable portion of our nature, implanted in it by the One who made us. The only nation I know of which through any great portion of its history seemed to live without any direct and authorized acknowledgment of this hope was the Jewish; and their apparent temporary abandonment of it could only have been sustained, and I think was only sustained, by a system of theocratic ethics which made right and wrong rewarded or punished in this world, and God deal a full and sufficient measure of justice to each one here. This might have been, and indeed was, an incorrect interpretation of the actual providence of God, but it showed the necessity of a belief in His justice, so that, to the nation who did not receive the belief in a rectifying Hereafter, it was absolutely essential to hold the belief in a perfect justice here. And thus the Jewish belief was a necessary corollary of its disbelief, or its disbelief was only made possible, for a continuance, by its belief, and either way was shown the necessity to them of vindicating the justice of God.

This universal hope has further had its confirmation in the positively asserted and numerously attested and steadily believed instances or signs of the continued existence in a spiritual form of persons who had passed the gates of death. Thousands and tens of thousands of our

fellow-creatures have borne testimony, and testimony that in any ordinary case would have been deemed by every one sufficient, that they had seen and had speech of friends who had in the body died away from this earth. I cannot, according to any modest or philosophical estimate of these facts, refuse to receive them as phenomenal, and possessing their own appropriate weight in any large and just estimate of the presumptive evidences connected with this subject. Doubtless the firm persuasion of the reality of a spiritual immortality may itself have led to some of these real or supposed experiences, but conversely the experiences themselves have also undoubtedly led to this strong persuasion.

The clear-headed, strong-minded Apostle Paul positively declares, and more than once, that he had seen our Lord, and more than once after his death upon the cross. And this he does deliberately and in writing, and in writing the authenticity of which is undoubted. Several others of the same age bore similar testimony, and the apostles were so persuaded of it that their teaching as a whole rests upon it as the foundation of their faith and preaching. That our Lord Jesus Christ while on earth taught the doctrine of the soul's immortality, taught it and lived it, I adduce not here as an argument in its favour, though to me it is one. It is one to me, because I trust his insight, I lean on his authority, and I love him with my whole soul; and I cannot believe that the sun that rose on Galilee rises on it still, that the mount that overlooked the temple overlooks its site now, that the very brook rolls at its feet, perhaps the very olive grows on its side, and yet that he who

was greater than that temple, more fair than the olive, more living than the brook, who led the panting spirit to the Mount of God, who to this day speaks words of everlasting command to us, and whispers hopes of never-dying comfort in our ears, whose name greets us when we enter into life, whose guidance leads us while we stay in life, and whose beckoning finger summons us to brighter homes when the bed of death is beneath us, has actually ceased to be, is at this moment less in actual personal life than the reptile that crawls or the sinner that still breathes upon this earth. It is impossible! And because he lives, I shall live also.

The admitted fact that the nature of this future life, the character of this hoped-for heaven, varies with varying faiths and climates, only confirms my previous positions, that we can know nothing positively of details, that we cannot go beyond conjectural probability and general principles, and that the future conditions of a continued life can only be realized to our minds through the analogies of the present.

Thus we find, as we should expect, that the delights and sufferings of the future life bear in each nation a close analogy to the delights and sufferings with which they are most familiar in the present. The hell of the Scandinavian Edda is intensely cold. The hell of the East-originating Christian is intensely hot. The wild Indian's heaven is, or was, where there was good hunting. The Mahometan's, where there is undying and never-satiated sensual pleasure. The Christian's, where there is perpetual praise. Swedenborg, while too nearly preserving the vulgar idea of hell,

rose, to his great credit, far above that idea of heaven. He describes, for instance, the overwhelming weariness and the paralyzing monotony which would arise from the exclusive occupation of praise, and finally dismisses the priests, who are so quaintly described as continually urging the goaded and wearied sense to incessant praise and worship, with these words: "Do you not know," he asks, "what is meant by glorifying God? Its meaning is, to bring forth the fruits of love, i.e. to discharge all the duties of our calling with faithfulness, sincerity, and diligence: for this, indeed, is the love of God and the love of our neighbour, and constitutes the bond of society and the public good." Have you never read these words of our Lord: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples"?

And as with nations and religions, so with individuals: the wearied finds his heaven in rest, the sorrowful in comforting peace, the sufferer in having no more pain. To some, the absence of earthly temptations, and, with earthly temptations, of earthly sin and lower doing, and the liberation of the spirit from bodily weights and besettings, and its elevation into an atmosphere more favourable to lofty aims and pure living, is the great charm and the great hope of the future life. To some, ceaseless activity in service, or ceaseless advance in knowledge. These various hopes and longings, felt by individual Christians, seem to be more justly representative of the essential spirituality of the holy Christian faith than other still very prevalent and defective ones; and, if not any of them by itself exclusively true, to indicate the line in which truth runs.

I do not myself believe in any of the current divisions either of people or time or place. I cannot understand an only two-fold division into good and bad, as the distinctive shades of character are delicate and innumerable; a two-fold division of existence into time and eternity, as life is continuous and indissoluble; or a two-fold division of place and condition, as "the mind is its own place," and happiness and misery must have as many varieties of intensity as there are individual souls to share them.

And thus life in the present and life in the future, as we contemplate them, are not two distinct, separate and unequally divided periods of time—seventy years here and eternity there—but parts of each other, the second a continuance of the first, both spiritually homogeneous, governed by the same principles of right and truth, directed by the same law of duty and of progress, carrying on the same ever-during process of growth and development; rewards and punishments not relegated to a distant futurity, but present with us now, as the consequences of our own act and thought, and in a sense therefore continuing with us for ever; the possibilities of the future not confined to earth, but extended to heaven; and thus there, as here, room for growth, for penitence, for improvement, for rectification, for compensation, and for retribution.

The case being so, then, it may be replied, the nature of this future life being in itself so indeterminate, the presumptions in support of its certainty, though so numerous and so strong, not amounting, as it appears to many minds, to absolute demonstration, would it not be as well to leave this matter alone? If life has here on earth a

substantive duty, career, and value of its own—if it be of the same genus and order as that which you contemplate after death—if the principles by which it is to be guided, the affections by which it is to be swayed, the pursuit of truth and knowledge by which it is to be characterized—if the justice, right, goodness, and mercy, which we reverence and cultivate here, are to continue unchanged in their essence in the coming state—why not leave matters as they stand, live the life you ought to live here, knowing that this is the best preparation for the life you hope to live hereafter, and not press into undue and disproportioned prominence a hope or a belief to many of us not resting on incontestable foundations, and which really exercises, and need exercise, no practical influence upon life as it is?

Why? Because, in the first place, we cannot. Nothing ever has repressed or ever will be able to repress thinking, hoping, believing on this subject. You cannot help its entering into and forming part of the thought of our life. You may drive it out, at least for a time, from your own thought, but you cannot drive it out of the thought of your race. It rises up afresh, as from an ever-bubbling and perennial fount, in every generation. Why? Because life does not and cannot go on the same without it as with it. Its presence or absence is not a matter of indifference. It is the most powerful factor that can be introduced into human life, altering all its proportions and a great part of its significance. I do indeed believe that in the way this expectation of a future life has been manipulated by theology, the influence of pressing and

immediate consequences has been greatly underrated, and of removed and distant ones greatly exaggerated.

But for all that, this expectation is by no means a matter of no practical importance. It is the most active alterative you can introduce into the health of the world. Even here upon earth no man pretends that duration is not a most significant element in his calculations. No man pretends that even here, in this present life, it is the same thing to his views, feelings or actions, whether his residence on any particular spot is likely to be for one year or his whole life. The wandering Arab and the settled European, the chance visitor and the regular dweller, the dying proprietor and the vigorous heir, the restless nomad and the patient tiller of the soil, all differ in the views they take and the value they attach to things. Habits, pursuits, friendships, what we are careless about and what we are anxious about, are all inevitably and materially affected by the element of duration.

Right itself, it is true, does not change its nature, and what is essentially wrong and bad does not change its nature; but the momentous good of rightness and the momentous evil of wrongness cannot but become intensified by the added consideration that they prolong and extend and diffuse themselves along the never-ending lines of an everlasting existence. Bereavement where no re-union is expected is not the same thing as bereavement where re-union is certain. Death is not the same thing. Poverty is not the same thing. Pain is not the same thing. And a mean mind ceases to be the transient and despicable thing, and a pure and upright one the unprofitable

thing, and the inner heart, whether good or bad, the indifferent thing, that the aims and results of this life only would sometimes seem to make them. And a man must have lived somewhere out of Christendom at least who has it not in his power to quote some instance or instances within his knowledge of the belief in immortality having soothed a trouble, strengthened against a temptation, assuaged a pain, or comforted and armed for death.

It is in vain, therefore, to say (even on these grounds alone of altered proportions, altered relations, altered estimates and values) that the belief in extended life is practically of no importance to us, and that we may just as well wait and see what will happen.

For, further, this belief in immortality affects us not only in our individual conditions, but it affects us socially, affects us in our feeling and conduct towards each other and our race. In fact, it would almost seem that this effect of the belief was the more fully accomplished of the two. It would almost seem, by a reference to facts, that we had more evidence of the social and public effects of this belief than of the private. It would not, indeed, be just to decide on such a subject from what *appears;* for what men do for others, as a consequence of this general belief, is of its own nature overt and public; what they do and feel for themselves is often known only to God and their own hearts.

The sorrow borne, and the tear dried, and the trial braved, and the evil resisted, and the comfort and strength derived, are oftentimes things of the inner heart; a stranger knows not of them; they come not by observation. But

the cry of rescue to a soul, made for purity, yet steeped in vice—made for happiness, yet corroded by care—made for a free self-ownership and self-command, yet crushed into self-annihilation by the absolute ownership of another —such a cry rings in our ears, and is known and heard of all men. It is incontestable that the belief in man as the possessor of an immortal soul has done more to humanize society, establish private rights, extend mutual regard and respect among men, redeem degraded castes, soften the rigour of punishment and the ferocity of vengeance, and ennoble and purify the whole social organization, than any other belief that has ever swayed the human mind. That man is a being to live for ever, and to live happily or unhappily, worthily or unworthily, seems to have been an active and efficient belief, prompting to beneficence when every other was sluggish. It seems to have supplied motives to exertion when all other motives failed. Passions and affections that have been dormant under all other stimulants have wakened up into quivering life under the belief that the concern or interest demanded for a given creature, or a given race, was demanded, not for a vanishing-point, but for souls that were to live for ever. Tales of suffering and degradation, tales of ignorance and vice, tales of violence and outrage (their scenes being at a distance), have passed over human ears and human hearts without inflicting a single wound of sorrow, or exciting a single feeling of benevolence and sympathy, of sufficient depth and force to stimulate to effective acts of remedy while the life that now is only was affected. A few years more or less of misery or of sin (it is a sorrow

ful acknowledgment, but history forces us to confess it is a true one) was not practically found to be a difference of such importance as to supply men with motive enough to brave the risks and sustain the labour and the loss of removing the evil they saw, and perhaps even mildly deplored. A few years more, and the sinner would offend no longer; a few years more, and the profligate would have died and rotted from the earth; a few years more, and the captive's chain should no more gall him, his groans would pierce no ear, and the degradation of his spirit would terminate with his spirit. Wronged and wronger, sinner and sinned against, would all be swept off the stage of life, their acts and their experiences annihilated with themselves. But directly that these wrongs and injuries, these stains and vices, were pointed out as branding immortal beings—directly the future, the eternal future, of these creatures was seen to be a part of, and indissolubly connected with, their Now—directly it was felt that you were dealing with a creature that was never to die, and was, as it were, thus of the nature of a god—the intensest interest and the most fervid anxiety were aroused, and men were up and doing.

I do not say that men ought to have waited for this super-added motive. I do not say that the grossest misconceptions of its nature did not enter into men's ideas of this immortality; but I am speaking fact and history when I say that the sympathy of man with man, the self-sacrificing energy of his desire to save and serve him, never reached its height, never found its full power, till the persuasion that he was a being of an immortal life and

a deathless destiny got full possession of the heart of our humanity. And at this moment, even among those who do not entertain or do not vividly realize this hope, its lingering traces are stamped upon their hearts, their lives, their actions; and they cannot wholly dispossess themselves of the influence of a past, if not to them a present, faith. The very world they live in is deeply coloured by it; the very atmosphere they breathe is sensibly impregnated with it; and isolated as they may feel, and regretfully feel, themselves to be from a conscious possession and enjoyment of it, the circumambient air of the human life around them breathes of it, and they live in a world and among a race actuated, moved, intensified by the hopes that "are full of immortality."

The acknowledgment of the fact that the negro slaves of our own Atlantic islands were immortal beings, did more to excite and to sustain a solemn and resistless interest in their fate, did more to enlist the patient missionary in their service, and awaken themselves to a sense of the intensity of their degradation, than any reasoning on abstract human rights, or any respect for supposed requirements of justice and humanity, could have succeeded in doing. The fact that, with few exceptions, the people most impressed with this faith were the most earnestly and perseveringly enlisted in that effort, and the further fact, that the greatest thing that helped them from outside was the corresponding faith, newly risen in the slaves themselves, that they, too, were children of God and heirs of immortality, did more, we may be persuaded, for the achievement of the result, than any mere

philanthropy and abstract notions of the equal rights of man.

In the case of human manners and morals it is the same. I have travelled through districts of this country with persons who could well remember when, from the violent and brutal ferocity of the people living in them, the most innocuous stranger could not pass without personal danger, without, that is, the certainty of insult and the risk of injury. The inhabitants were little better than savages; the attempt to civilize and reform them was in many instances the perilling of life.

Whitfield and Wesley faced these formidable districts, redeemed these mistaken wretches, penetrated where the only part of civilization that had penetrated before was the law (and not always that), and where moral control and interference were unknown.

Why did they make this attempt? Believe me, it was not because the equipages of the neighbouring gentry could not pass through them without being greeted with stones; believe me, it was not because they were rough and ill-dressed, uncivilized and uncouth; it was not even because property was unsafe in the neighbourhood, and yet the prison not always sure of having the offender for an inmate. It was because they believed these people had Souls—that they were unwittingly sinning against these—that they were violating their own natures, sinning not only against the laws of man, but sinning against God and their own immortality. And the people listened to these men, and followed them like lambs, only for the same reason. They were placed at once, not under the

slight controls and inducements of civilization, but under the solemn and awful control of their own immortal destinies. It was told them what they were and what they were doing to themselves, and they saw its heinousness only when they saw their immortality, only when they saw a world stretching beyond the habitations that surrounded them, and a bar beyond the court of justice upon earth.

I could multiply these illustrations of the effect that an earnest belief in a future and immortal state has had upon our life indefinitely. In fact, the book of human biography and human history is full of them; but I think I have at least said enough to prove my point, that this belief is in its effects a practical one; that it is not a matter of indifference to men whether they receive it or not; that it is not a thing to be passed over as unimportant; that it is not our wisest course to leave it uncultivated, unenforced, and unapplied, and quietly wait in silence to see what will happen.

No; I confess with sorrow the low and unworthy forms of the reception of this great hope, taking, and of necessity, their colour from the character of the souls on which it dawns. I confess with shame the capital priests have made of this noble, God-implanted conviction, and how they have too often degraded it into the instrument for establishing a dominion of terror here on earth, by the reflection of the lurid lights of hell, and how they have founded a system of bribes and spiritual subjection on it. I confess with regret how often, even by the influence and action of religious-minded men, it has been made to reduce

from its true significance the life that now is, and the importance of the duties and the interests which alone, in fact, are ours, and on the wise and earnest use of which so much of what is to come depends. I confess with pain how much of life it has, by its disproportioned insistance and a mistaken interpretation, deprived of its natural gladness and brightness, and how much of the death it ought in so many instances to have cheered and illumined and consoled, it has made dreary and abject and dreadful by groundless doubts and fears.

But I regard all these as fogs and mists and pestilential vapours, rising in dimming obscurity from man and earth to God and heaven, to hang between us and the bright sunshine of the real hope, clouds which, thank God! are, before wiser teachings* and a juster knowledge, rapidly dispersing.

And I embrace with an unspeakable gratitude and joy the purer hope that is set before us, saying in the reverent because reticent tones of the Scripture: There is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. There is a home of many mansions for the souls of earth. There is a new heaven, a new earth, a holy city,

* Notably in our own day before the fresh heart and the ready illustrative learning of Canon Farrar in his popular Sermons on "The Eternal Hope." Not that the Church or humanity had been voiceless on this matter before. But we owe much to the express efforts of Canon Farrar in the latter part of this century, as in the earlier to the eminent physiologist (and at that time also divine) Dr. Southwood Smith, in his careful and painstaking volume on "The Divine Government," a work which has passed through many editions, and which, considering the present public receptiveness on this subject, deserves to pass through many more.

yet before us. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived, of the joys that God has prepared for them that love Him; but wearied ones shall find rest there, and weepers shall dry their tears; the slave shall no more fear the voice of his master, the wronged shall be righted, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake be blessed.

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